University of Alberta

"Preying on Foresaid Remains": Irish Identity and the Borders of Mourning

by

Duncan Greenlaw ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

Edmonton, Alberta

Spring 2003

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Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Preying on Foresaid Remains": Irish Identity and the Borders of Mourning submitted by Duncan Greenlaw in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Acknowledgements

My thanks go first to Christopher Bracken for his consistently challenging advice, intellectual motivation, and supportive encouragement at every stage of this project. I would also like to thank Heather Zwicker, whose generous responses and insights throughout the writing process have been invaluable; Rob Brazeau, who offered always encouraging comments and conversations on this project and broadened my perspective on Irish studies; and Karyn Ball, whose analysis and suggestions have continually urged me to consider my work in new ways. I am extremely grateful also to David Lloyd for his engaged discussions and guidance. Many thanks, as well, to Kim Brown, Jim Mulvihill, and Doug Aoki, who offered help and advice at various stages of the project. Finally, I am indebted to Karen Ball, Jim Moodie, Colin Greenlaw, and Gundy and Andrew Macnab for their support and understanding throughout.

Abstract

This dissertation examines how mourning has been used to secure political and historical borders in Ireland, from the Proclamation of the Republic in 1916 to the 1981 hunger strikes and continuing negotiations of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement. Studying the overlap between political, literary, and theoretical texts, it argues that mourning is a language of affirmative failure that both establishes and exceeds the limits of the nation, allowing for repeated revaluations of Irish identity as an incomplete and provisional project. The resistances at work in the language of mourning subvert its own tendency toward the kind of conceptual containment that creates fixed political positions. Focusing on how republicans have turned this process of failure and revision to their advantage, this study points also to sites of contextual displacement that enable voices and histories previously excluded from dominant colonial and national narratives to emerge.

Chapter One reads the language of mourning in Irish newspaper obituaries of Beckett, Yeats, and Joyce, in the texts of these writers, and in Derrida?s theory of mourning as it reaches back to Freud and Nietzsche. Chapter Two focuses on the resistances of mourning in a language of commitment and context used in decommissioning talks since 1996, tracing a strategy of discursive repositioning that has gained Sinn Féin and the IRA a voice in the foreground of official negotiations in Northern Ireland. Chapter Three extends this reading to debates on Irish borders from the Proclamation to conflicting views on the "postnational" identity of Ireland and its position in the European Union. Turning to Bobby Sands's prison writings and

commemorations on the twentieth anniversary of the hunger strikes, Chapter Four looks for ways in which opportunities for historical revaluation are opened in the mourning of and by the strikers. Chapter Five, prompted by contradictory calls for responsibility to political legacies since Sands, builds on Kierkegaard's theories of faith and repetition to study a paradox of responsibility that troubles such demands. It argues that the language of simultaneous fidelity and betrayal surrounding a series of events in 2001--decommissioning gestures, republican reburials, and political redesignations at Assembly elections--reveals a strategy of decision-making that reaches beyond the work of mourning and accountability, and beyond narratives of historical progress or identical repetition.

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Introduction

1. Mourning

In 1916, Patrick Pearse, who was soon to be mourned as a martyr, proclaimed a sovereign nation into being on the basis of mourning. Before he was executed for his role in the Easter Rising, he delivered a graveside speech for the Fenian hero, O'Donovan Rossa. "Life springs from death; and from the graves of patriot men and women spring living nations," he said. The English are "fools," he added, for "they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace" ("O'Donovan" 136-37). He enshrined this view of mourning as a maker of nations in the Proclamation of the Republic, which called for rebellion and sacrifice "in the name of God and of the dead generations from which [Ireland] receives her old tradition of nationhood" (206). Eamon de Valera's 1937 Constitution of Ireland repeated the gesture of mourning by "gratefully remembering" those dead generations who had engaged in a "heroic and unremitting struggle" for national independence (154). Recent revisions of Irish identity in the North have reinvested in the same rhetoric. The 1993 Downing Street Declaration urges an end to "past divisions" (412) through collective mourning, asking the people of Northern Ireland "to look upon the people of the Republic as friends, who share their grief and shame" (411). The 1998 Good Friday Agreement (signed, like the Easter 1916 Proclamation, during an occasion that commemorates the beginning of immortal life through death) opens with the reassurance that while a "fresh start" and "reconciliation" are needed to honour them, "we must never forget those who have died" (171). Since then, prominent republicans have continued to reiterate Pearse by treating mourning as a means of securing the nation's political and historical borders. In a 1999 Belfast commemoration pamphlet, Sinn Féin's vice-president, Martin McGuinness, anticipated the day when republicans will arrive at an "overall history" that will finally "make sense" of those who have died in the struggle (Introduction 3). And at a hunger strike commemoration rally the day after the IRA's 6 May 2000 recommitment to decommissioning, Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Féin, insisted that the only fitting monument to the republican dead would be the ending of partition and the unity of the Irish people ("Thousands March").

When McGuinness and Adams defer such a fitting or overall memory into the future, they anticipate further repetitions of a language that exceeds the borders of politics. They speak a language of mourning where the categories of nationalism, literature, and philosophy intersect, overlap and displace one another. Samuel Beckett's narrators, for example, also perpetually mourn, both for others and for the loss of their own sovereign borders. They repeatedly approach but fall short of an overall history, and are forced to defer their ideal of unity into a future where today's failing words may become "fitting monuments" to what they describe. Haunted by the "tenacious trace[s]" and remains of irretrievable lost ones, they are incapable of achieving the sense of self-containment that would come from finally gathering all of their memories into themselves (*Ill* 86). A haunting relation also unsettles the work of Jacques Derrida, who partially recollects Nietzsche, Freud, Heidegger and others to develop a theory of "impossible mourning" (*Mémoires* 6). In what Freud has described as a complete "work of mourning," the mourning subject anticipates securing its own borders by taking the dead into itself on the way toward severing its attachments to what has been lost. In Derrida's reading of mourning as a means of digestion and assimilation, such a process can never be finished. Memory can never fully interiorize, absorb, and abolish the "non-totalizable trace" (*Mémoires* 38) of the lost other. There is always another mouthful, always more to remember. Yet the failure to fully digest the dead, or the events of the past, amounts also to a success, in that it prompts us to recognize the irreducible alterity of others: we exceed our own borders by recalling those who remain unassimilable. As Beckett might have put it, through impossible mourning we "fail better" (*Worstward* 89) to bury the other within us.

This study treats political, literary, and nationalist texts as works of mourning. It focuses on a series of interlocking commemorative discourses that continue to influence the peace process in Ireland: obituaries, decommissioning talks, and hunger strike commemorations. Reading reiterations of these discursive structures in the texts of Beckett, Joyce, and Yeats, as well as in theories of memory and history from Nietzsche to Derrida, I analyze ways in which the nation paradoxically ruptures its political, historical, and cultural limits in the act of promising them into existence. I argue that as the borders of "Irishness" are both established and exceeded through memories of the dead, the language of mourning allows for revaluations of Irish identity as an always-incomplete project.

Avoiding a tendency in certain political and critical debates to conclude that mourning either consigns the nation to historical replication or provides it with a fixed account of its losses, I look at how the revaluative tools of mourning are already being turned to the advantage of those who mourn. As a language of affirmative failure, mourning renders commemorative identities provisional and reiterable. It disrupts its own tendency to create fixed positions of historical and political identity. By disabling such territorial thinking, mourning can enable new formulations of identity and history to emerge as dominant modes of discourse are redirected by those who were previously marginalized by its codes. Commemorative rhetoric used as a means of containment finally resists its own aim: rather than marking the borders of identity by incorporating the past, it sends the presence of "Irishness" into the future as something on the way to being formed. Through the structures of resistance and excess already at work within it, the language of mourning reveals strategies of political reconstellation beyond those conventionally read into documents like the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.

While Pearse's rhetoric is one of the sources most often invoked in popular descriptions of Ireland as a nation formed by mourning, critics including David Lloyd and John Brannigan have offered alternative readings of its role. Lloyd describes Pearse's Proclamation (co-signed with other members of the Provisional Government in 1916) as a performative act of constitution that requires the state to engage in "repeated acts of commemoration [. . .] to revalidate the legitimacy of its representative function" (*Anomalous* 72-73). Pearse's insistence on sacrifice and remembrance, he argues, epitomizes the need for a perpetually reiterative national identity to "constantly locate the foundations of social forms in violence and death rather than continuing organic life" (79). Brannigan reads both the Proclamation and Pearse's poetry as utterances of a nation constituted by death, a "culture of death that lives at the limits" (64). Building on these analyses, and on Lloyd's later description of the insistence on recuperative commemoration in national and colonial contexts as an "injunction to mourn" ("Colonial" 218), I examine how repetitions of this nationalist discourse of mourning expose it as an ambiguous rhetoric that both contains and disseminates Irish identity, both burying the dead and exhuming them. In a process that oscillates between containment and excess, mourning is rendered "impossible," in the sense that the coherent identity formed by introjecting the lost other in a complete work of mourning is endlessly deferred.

In his reading of European settlers anticipating the death and absorption of aboriginal cultures in Canada, Christopher Bracken has emphasized the function of impossible mourning in the conception of national and cultural limits. Canadian colonial identity, he argues, was thought through the contradictory aim both to assimilate the memory of the aboriginal other after its anticipated death, and to hold the other at an absolute distance. Through a future-oriented "devouring national memory" that sought "both to draw the First Nations into itself and to hold them beyond its outermost limit" (186), the Canadian nation exceeded itself in the act of inscribing its own limits, subjecting itself to "an impossible mourning that inevitably falls short of its aim to interiorize an aboriginal other" (204). In the context of Ireland, the persistence of an impossible mourning that repeatedly fails to interiorize the memory of the dead ruptures both the national context and the contexts of discourses applied to the nation. It suggests that Irish identity inevitably reaches beyond itself in the effort to establish its borders.

Commemorative discourse, then, is at once recognizably "Irish" and always in excess of such a concept. While mourning is insisted upon in a nation traditionally determined by conflicting recollections of political, geographical, and historical contexts, the insistence itself undermines the fixity of such boundaries. Its repetitiveness emphasizes that mourning is not simply a theme but rather a process of linguistic conception where the creation of stable identities fails and where conventional borders between obituaries, literary fictions, journalism, nationalism, and theoretical rhetoric are rendered unsustainable.

At the same time as mourning moves toward structural closure, it also exceeds this conceptual structure, and these sites of excess can be used to prompt political change through appropriations of commemorative discourse. As a self-contradictory process, mourning enacts the aporia of constitution where spatial and temporal presence is conceivable only through a relation of alterity that haunts and disables its sense of stability--only through the interval which "must separate the present from what it is not in order for the present to be itself," but which must "by the same token, divide the present in and of itself" (Derrida, "Différance" 13). The presence of the mourning subject or nation is deferred when thought across this irreducible interval between signifier and signified, statement and subject, death and life.

Pearse's description of a nation that "holds the graves" of its martyrs both establishes and disestablishes Irishness as those graves become crypts. Borrowing the term from Abraham and Torok, Derrida describes crypts as undecidable spaces in which the other is maintained both dead and alive, assimilated inside while remaining outside of the mourning subject. They are spaces "made to keep (conserve-hidden) the *living dead*" on an undecidable "borderline" between introjection and incorporation, between successful mourning and a melancholic disavowal of loss ("Foreword: *Fors*" xxxvi, xvi, emph. Derrida's). Kept as a part of the nation apart from it, the dead are accepted within yet excepted from Ireland. Pearse's affirmation of Ireland's tomb-like "restlessness," then, can be reaffirmed differently: the dead who cannot be completely contained function as an absolute other that enables the formation of national identity through a relation of conceptual dependence that prevents the nation from closing in on itself.

To expand on the ways in which mourning unsettles conceptual containment, I turn to descriptions by Nietzsche, Derrida, and Foucault of how our identity is defined by the system of discourses we inhabit. In ways that are distinct but also function as points of articulation for one another as they are reconfigured in the language of the peace process, these theorists have shown that we are limited by those groups of linguistic statements, contained within provisionally governing rules for their use, that determine how we produce knowledge, construct accounts, and form descriptions of ourselves and the world. Mourning shows how this condition can turn to our advantage. It demonstrates that if subjects and nations are produced, they are also performatively reproduced. Rather than coming to terms with their past in order to establish their presence, such identities are projected ahead of themselves. The paradox of impossible mourning--where identity is constructed only on the condition that it repeatedly fails to be realized--suggests that what Nietzsche describes as a "revaluation of values" (*Beyond* 117) has always been at work within discourses, occurring at the site where the language of mourning turns on itself. “Whatever exists,” writes Nietzsche, “having somehow come into being, is again and again reinterpreted to new ends, taken over, transformed, and redirected by some power superior to it” in a “continuous sign-chain of ever new interpretations and adaptations” (*Genealogy* 2.12). For Foucault, this insight recognizes that discursive terms are repeatedly reappropriated (“Nietzsche” 154). When we trace the reiterations of Irish commemorative rhetoric through which one borrowed vocabulary of revaluation is drawn into the context of another, the impossible mourning that insists on recounts rather than accounts, on rumination rather than digestion, also points to those open sites of intersection and resistance where voices or histories usually excluded from the assimilating systems of prevalent narratives may begin to appear.

Each chapter follows the texts under study into questions of context, historicization, exile, authority, commitment, and future-oriented identity, all of which figure in debates about issues ranging from Irish literary heritage to the “cross-border” bodies of the Northern Ireland Assembly and Ireland’s position in the European Union. By combining these issues, I try to uncover some of the contradictory structures of language behind the often entrenched and stereotypically limiting treatments of Irish culture presented in media reports and nostalgic accounts of national heritage. As they are re-enacted in the language of context, commitment, decommissioning, criminalization, history, and responsibility, the internal resistances of mourning to its own gestures of completion are voiced and deployed, with apparently increasing degrees of recognition and effectiveness, by political figures from Bobby Sands to Gerry Adams. Adams’ political objectives do not escape a tendency toward fixity, but they do not submit to it either. The oscillations of his language, and his strategic awareness of its malleability, reveal ways in which political positions are renegotiated and conceptual reductions of national history countered. While recognizing that the republican cause responds to a history of colonial domination and discrimination, my own objective in what follows is not simply to advocate republican resistance, the reasons for which have been convincingly explained and defended in other accounts, but rather to draw attention to often unrecognized patterns in republican rhetoric that resist not only British control but also the restrictive visions of national identity that are often offered in its place. Republican leaders and commemorative communities demonstrate that their own language repeatedly subverts the contexts of meaning that structure the logic of colonial narratives as well as the nationalized narratives of commemoration that tend, as Lloyd has argued, to reproduce that logic ("Colonial" 222). In such narratives, what is often called the "work of politics" reproduces an insistence on continual progressive development and modernization that seeks to ensure, as Dublin's Foreign Affairs Minister Brian Cowen has put it, that "the nightmarish scenes, such as those from North Belfast, are consigned forever to the pages of history" (qtd. in Pierse). When such a project aims to relegate the traces of the past to a position of untroubling confinement and to finalize its understanding in the pages of history, it avoids the possibility of reconfiguration.

In the political rhetoric of the North, those speeches, decisions and sacrifices that express secure national identities and continuous legacies are also doubled by an inexpressibility that is unable to make sense of the simultaneous severance of such limits and legacies. But the persistence of efforts to overcome this difficulty does not demonstrate only a disavowal of the fact that the stability and unity of political agreements, histories, and national borders repeatedly proves impossible to achieve. While failure may not be acknowledged, it is indicated in the inability to fully account for the sacrifice that inhabits political decisions. It appears in the gaps, inconsistencies and contradictions that prevent complete justification. A particular kind of faith in provisionality and revaluation is revealed in repeated attempts to fail better, and pushes mourning beyond an irresolvable condition of inadequate recollection. It looks for possibilities within and beyond the desire to regain the seemingly lost ideals of unified nations, incorruptible documents, secure political institutions and historical foundations.

In Chapter One, I introduce the structure of impossible mourning through a reading of Irish newspaper obituaries of Beckett, Yeats, and Joyce, the texts of these writers, and Derrida's theory of mourning as it reaches back to Nietzsche. I analyze how these writers, in a way that is anticipated in their own texts, are held by their mourners on the border between introjection and incorporation. I then turn to the language of mourning in negotiations on the Good Friday Agreement in order to introduce the possibilities both offered and resisted by a similarly indeterminate language of containment and excess in Richard Kearney's reading of Irish identity and postnationalism.

Chapter Two focuses on the operations of impossible mourning in a language of "commitment" and "context" used in decommissioning talks--a language continually redeployed since its crucial function in the ambiguous contract of the Good Friday Agreement. Describing mourning as a commitment to realize oneself as a context capable of accounting for what seems to have been lost, I follow the use and re-use of these two key terms in the mourning of political promises and in the sense of loss that accompanies commitments to disarm. Analyzing how Sinn Féin and the IRA have revalued the uncontainable language of commitment and context to their advantage, redirecting the demand to decommission against the British while simultaneously seeking and deferring the Agreement's full implementation, I argue that this strategy of discursive repositioning, which has gained them a voice in the foreground of official negotiations in Northern Ireland, generates the possibility of repeated revisions that exceed the often-expressed desire of politicians to remain faithfully within the proper and consistent terms of the Agreement.

Chapter Three extends the paradoxes of commitment and context to other debates on Irish borders both within and beyond the Good Friday Agreement, from the Proclamation of the Republic to conflicting views on the status of Ireland in Europe. Here I return to critical discussions of the mournful contexts of postnationalism, and suggest that the language of reconciliation and unification applied in the Agreement to an unrealizable range of social and political commitments means that those promises may continue to be transformed by those whose interests are inadequately addressed by its terms.

Focusing on Bobby Sands's prison writings and on commemorations during the twentieth anniversary of the 1981 hunger strikes, Chapter Four turns to ways in which chances for historical revaluation are opened in commemorations of and by the strikers. In what I describe as a "hunger for history," these commemorations anticipate their own repetition and betray their inability to contain the dead in a finalized narrative. Rather than resolving their relation to the dead through a work of mourning that presents the past as a seamless history of sacrifice, accounts of the strikes allow also for a discontinuous sacrifice of history by revealing the inadequacy of the terms they have come to. After pointing to the way in which two opposing kinds of historical conclusion are described simultaneously in journalistic and academic accounts from David Beresford to Allen Feldman, I trace a similar sacrifice of history, and a process of performative and subversive encryption, in officially republican commemorations, including pamphlets, orations, and prisoners' accounts.

Prompted by repeated calls for fidelity to historical legacies and lessons since Sands, Chapter Five analyzes a paradox of simultaneous responsibility and irresponsibility that troubles such demands. Building on Kierkegaard's treatment of the maddening or unaccountable act of sacrifice that combines calculation with risk, I trace connections between historical responsibility and provisional mourning. I study the language of simultaneous secrecy and disclosure surrounding the IRA's gesture of decommissioning in October 2001, and conclude with a reading of two political moments of decision in recent Irish politics that have also both honoured and betrayed republican legacies: the reinterments of the "Forgotten Ten" republican martyrs in October 2001, and political redesignations at Assembly elections in November 2001. The language of responsibility and betrayal during these events uncovers a strategy of decision-making that reaches beyond the work of mourning and accountability, and beyond narratives of historical progress or stasis.

2. Theoretical Approach

i. Mourning and Citation

This study focuses on how mourning opens sites of articulation through which utterances are rendered different from themselves when reiterated and submitted to changing valuations and contextual tensions. The texts I examine are works of mourning, in that their limits of meaning and identity are inscribed in relation to the trace of other texts whose uncontainable echoes both enable and disable the possibility and stability of such limits. Following the insistence on particular terms in the language of the peace process to corresponding terms in theoretical and literary texts, I continually return to a series of statements that resemble each other, but only to the extent that they also share the condition of being distanced from the possibility of strict resemblance or identity.

As a process of commentary that draws connections between texts whose identity is unstably established through difference, and which articulates its own position in relation to those texts, my analysis is itself a work of mourning. I cite from, and from within, a network of imitations where reiterated metaphors and turns of phrase turn against the possibility of being contained and of containing the traces of other utterances. Each instance of citation, incomplete in itself, fails to refer to a stable original model or context. Rearranged in the context of Irish politics, prevalent theoretical terms become part of a discourse on national identity, decommissioning, hunger and responsibility that is neither fully identifiable with nor fully legitimated by the texts from which it borrows. In the broadest sense, the concepts behind these recurring terms are remembering and promising, which I consider in mutually constitutive combination as elements of mournful revaluation. My emphasis is on the discontinuity between repetitions of these concepts, and on the loss of legitimating foundations that comes from appealing simultaneously to the past and the future.

To resist prioritization between politics and literature, theory and commentary, I align and realign a series of utterances from texts that are in many ways incongruous, and which might otherwise be considered self-enclosed or incompatible. Studying what Bill Rolston has called the "postmodern lexicon" of the peace process, I trace strategic reiterations of the same terminologies and contradictions in the texts of McGuinness and Beckett, of Derrida and Irish newspaper obituaries, and across the contexts of decommissioning, the Good Friday Agreement, and hunger strike commemorations. What I offer is an alternative but necessarily provisional process for re-examining the language of the peace process, a language that exceeds the grasp of this study as it continues to be spoken into new forms, and as gestures of political agreement, opposition and compromise continue to made. Prompted in part by frequently contradictory demands for accountability and responsibility to historical legacies in political rhetoric, this approach does not aim to provide a complete account of the peace process itself or of theories of mourning, but instead proposes an analysis that questions the assumptions of accounting and responsibility. Its objective is to reveal the texts of theorists, politicians, journalists, and fiction writers as replaceable citations of a language of mourning that resists its own tendency either to establish intractable positions or to impose interpretive frameworks into which disparate moments of commemorative rhetoric can be subsumed.

The specific contexts in which the resistances of mourning occur are irreducible to one another, in part because similar processes of reiteration produce different results. Under the title of mourning, for example, I refer to Nietzsche's theories of sovereignty, sacrifice and critical history. These terms are taken out of their Nietzschean context not only by Foucault and Derrida, but by commentators on Ireland from Adams to Feldman, until they can be reconfigured again as a "sacrifice of history" that escapes the notion of fidelity to unalterable pasts or original authors. The meaning of sacrifice is redirected also when viewed in relation to Kierkegaard's theories of sacrifice and faith, a relation I follow in order to analyze the recontextualization of "sacrifice" from the language of promises used in the decommissioning process to the language of betrayal surrounding the hunger strikes. "Decommissioning," too, shifts its contents in this transition. Presented in the first instance as a political commitment to the future, gestures of decommissioning become, in the second, a betrayal of historical republican commitments. When these gestures coincide with public commemorations, prompting politicians to balance these interpretations of fidelity and betrayal against one another, the rhetoric of decommissioning resists being accommodated into a single comprehensible work of political development.

ii. Repetition

The question of reiteration is also useful for an analysis of rhetoric in and about conflicts in Ireland that are frequently accused of historical replication. Politicians and observers in the North imitate and recite one another while competing for the proper contents of national identities, but they do so in a way that weakens the boundaries they seek to establish. In the following chapters, I hope to show the unsustainability of borders not only between the texts under study, but also between distinctions that are often employed to perpetuate the conventionally historicized terms and positions of the conflict: distinctions between legitimate state defence and illegitimate terrorism, legal and criminal violence, demilitarization and decommissioning, civilization and savagery. To address the notion of historical replication, I return most often to Nietzsche's theory of the sovereign subject. In order to establish a sense of enduring identity, this subject promises to remain the same as himself, to return eternally to an "identical and self-same life" (*Thus* 237). But his promise is broken as soon as it is uttered. It divides him in the act of conceiving his borders, and defers his arrival at the self that it posits as its origin. The promise speaks into existence a self that survives for only as long as the utterance lasts, a self that must therefore be reaffirmed and reformed in changing contexts. A similar ephemerality can be applied to historical understanding when the events of the past are recognized as acquired truths that are transformed and rearticulated in new relations.

iii. Failure

When we rearticulate acquired truths we fail to acquire them. For Nietzsche, truth is acquired only by "forgetting" that coming to terms is impossible. Fixed understandings of the present and the past can only be achieved, and only then ephemerally, by forgetting that knowledge is a conceptual construct composed of a "mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, [and] anthropomorphisms" which "after long usage seem to a nation fixed, canonic and binding" ("On Truth" 180-81). In this analysis, I view such provisional moments of forgetting as performative moments that both fail to capture the past and anticipate further such failures.

Studying Ireland's sense of presence, Lloyd and Brannigan have noted that commemoration exposes the ephemerality of a state whose foundations are an effect of performative utterances, which legitimate themselves by creating their own referents. Such a state depends, obsessively, on repetition: on annual commemorations of the 1916 Proclamation or of national martyrs, for instance. In such performances, continuity is both established and breached. Geoffrey Bennington addresses this point through his analysis of the nation as a creation of "postal politics," a signified sought in the future--one toward which, as Brannigan notes, Pearse's Proclamation from the steps of the General Post Office in 1916 mails itself: Pearse sends a postcard "to an address that does not (yet) exist, Ireland" (Brannigan 61). If the myth of origination is an effect of language, it requires continual recreation in those letters of affirmation without which, and by which, it is threatened with extinction. "The final establishment of [. . .] legitimacy," Bennington writes, "can only be projected into an indefinite future" in this performative act where "the nation narrates a founding moment and produces effects of legitimacy through repetition" (132). Lloyd emphasizes a similar paradox by noting that the Proclamation exposes the ephemerality of its foundational act when it legitimates one state (the Irish Republic) by delegitimating another (British Ireland). The problematic it performs "in the very insistence on the provisionality of its authority" can be read, he explains, as the condition of an utterance that "constitutes the very people in whose name it claims to speak, while at the same time exposing the arbitrariness of foundation by delegitimating the previously constituted state in power" (*Ireland* 110-11 f.n). Both disavowing and drawing attention to its provisionality, the appeal by the authors of a republic to previous authorities (to the name of "the dead generations" from which Ireland receives her "old tradition of nationhood") is repeated in statements by national representatives from Sands to Adams. One of the paradoxes here is that the search for an identity defined by complete containment of the past anticipates success--its arrival at itself--in the future. Treating this promissory mourning as a passage toward "irresponsibility," I look at a series of Irish writers who look to the past for the sources of their authority, but who find that those sources in turn sought their own in the future.

While reiterations of terms like "context," "commitment," "decommissioning," and "criminality" deprive them of authority, the turning of terms against those who have already employed them is a form of resistance that can also turn back on itself. In a process I analyze in relation to the hunger strikers, mourning becomes a strategy of reappropriation whereby republican rhetoric tends to displace the authority not only of the British state, but also of the state that is presented as its own origin. From the terms of decommissioning to those of interment and internment, republican authorities are undermined at the same time as they are relied on to provide a monumentalizing touchstone for resistance. The effort to legitimate one's actions by recalling precursors whose authority cannot be contained or communicated intact is performed over an abyss of representation that fails to arrive at its beginning or end. Examining moments of commemorative foundation in which presence is sought by recalling past figures and events which in turn were never present to themselves, I suggest that alternative strategies of resistance and political change can arise from an awareness of the fact that legitimating models are destabilized through insistent attempts to claim them.

Recognizing that this analysis is necessarily one in a series of such failures to fully account for the past, and that a single theoretical model cannot come to terms with all of its subjects, I aim to remain affirmatively irresponsible to the subjects of this study, in the sense that I both accept and betray the legacy of the terms and theories I find in and redirect toward the peace process. My understanding of irresponsibility, drawn from a reading of Kierkegaard and Derrida, describes a position that recognizes the impossibility of providing narratives that are finally accountable and translatable into universally acceptable or readable terms. Irresponsibility reaches beyond codes of historical tradition and justification that aim to gather the events of the past into the kind of pattern that provides legitimating grounds for political acts in the present. Breaking faith with historical and political legacies, both asserting and severing its ties to them, it instead subjects an incomplete national identity, as well as commentaries upon it, to recontextualization.

Chapter 1

"Fail Better": Obituaries and Limits

1. Loss

In a 1989 obituary written for the *Irish Times*, John Banville, the paper's literary editor, remembers Samuel Beckett for being always gone and always there. By striving for "an autonomous art, independent of circumstance," he writes, "Beckett has been more successful than any other in this century in achieving [a] state of luminous absence." Beckett's "abiding presence," he adds a few lines later, has set an essential example for a new generation of writers ("Samuel"). Reworking the same obituary for an English audience in the *Observer*, Banville casts his indecision about absence and presence in national terms. Beckett was "a lord of language" who chose to abandon both his mother tongue and country and was famous for "preferr[ing] France at war to Ireland at peace." And yet, Banville insists, "the accent [of Beckett's writing] was Irish, and remained so long after he had left the country." While "his Irishness was not that of Joyce, nor even that of Yeats," it was always there in his fondness for a particular kind of stereotypical Irishness: "he liked the mutter, the singsong, the hawked-up curse, liked too the undernote of lamentation and remorse" in Irish expression ("Waiting"). The lamentations of a series of Irish obituaries--of Yeats and Joyce as well as Beckett--are haunted by a similar uncertainty. "Irishness" is uneasily established through a recollection of authors repeatedly defined as both absent and present, distant and near, apart from and a part of Ireland. Cast in the role of the other that both constitutes and divides the present, these writers' remains allow the Irish simultaneously to gain and lose a fixed sense of themselves.

In the *Irish Times* and the *Belfast Telegraph*, Beckett's death is repeatedly summed up as the "incalculable loss" (Banville, "Waiting"; "Tributes"; Devine) of an author whose work also yields what is called an "incalculable return" (Dukes). It is a return well-suited to the man whose plays are described in one *Irish Times* obituary as "blank cheque[s]" made out to the audience ("Solitary"), and whose famously self-sacrificing generosity is frequently linked to his Irishness. John Montague, an Irishman writing for the English *Guardian,* celebrates Beckett for being "deeply Irish" and for giving "permanent loans" without speculating on a return ("Gloom"). The *Belfast Telegraph* remembers "'an ordinary Irishman' who loved sports and gave all his money away" ("Godot's"), as though giving away somehow constitutes Irishness. In these obituaries, and in the nationalist discourse of mourning they echo, it does. To give Beckett away is also to regain him for Ireland. A sense of self-containment is achieved by exceeding Ireland's borders, by remembering an author they could never properly contain. Like many of his characters who complain they were "never properly born,"[1] Beckett is always improperly born as a national representative. Instead he is borne as a trace of the other retained in the same, the trace that opens "the enigmatic relationship of the living to its other and of an inside to an outside: spacing" (Derrida, *Grammatology* 70).

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[1] "Never been properly born" (*Watt* 248); "I shall never get born and therefore never get dead" (*Malone* 309); "I shall never get born, having failed to be conceived" (*Unnamable* 489). The phrase is borrowed from one of Jung's lectures (see Bair 209) which is recounted by Maddy Rooney in *All That Fall* (82-84).

This quotation follows from Derrida's discussion of the trace as a condition of meaning earlier in the same passage from *Of Grammatology*: "without a trace retaining the other as other in the same, no difference would do its work and no meaning would appear. It is not the question of a constituted difference here, but rather, before all determination of the content, of the pure movement which produces difference" (62). As the mark of alterity that haunts and inhabits the structure of the sign--and so also the structure of concepts such as identity and presence--the trace motivates and perpetuates the deferral of meaning by disabling the arrival of signifiers at stable signifieds. As I will continue to elaborate in what follows, the trace is a non-origin that lies behind the detour of representation whereby the signifier refers to the signified as its origin or end precisely by distancing itself from it, in the same way as the mourning subject or nation is constituted only through exile, deferred by the thought of itself.

Among the obituaries that conceive of Irish identity through a writer who is retained within the nation's sense of itself yet kept at a distance, both the *Irish Times* and the *Belfast Telegraph* also quote the Taoiseach, Charles Haughey, claiming Beckett for the nation while giving him away. Haughey's recognition of Beckett's "unique contribution" to "Irish literature" is part of a statement that hinges the nation to its outside: Beckett has made "a unique contribution to Irish, European and world literature" (qtd. in "Tributes"; Devine). The Taoiseach adds (again withholding his gift from the other other of England) that Beckett's "passing will be mourned equally in Ireland and

France" (qtd. in "Tributes"). Fintan O'Toole follows Haughey with a similarly unsettled statement in the *Irish Times*. Conceding that Beckett was not "an Irish writer in any narrow sense of the term," he reminds us how crucial it is to remember that "Beckett's work always remained haunted by the South Dublin landscape." The *Irish Independent* enlists Edna O'Brien to resist the suggestion by a London *Times* obituarist that Beckett "was only truly at home in Paris" ("Samuel Beckett: Unassuming"). "It is not that Samuel Beckett is a nationalistic writer," O'Brien explains. When she last spoke with him "he had not set foot in his native land since 1968, having no desire to." "But he did have the fibulations of his country in him," and always "embodied a particularly Irish sensibility." If Ireland has always lost Beckett, the return on his loss is incalculable. Or rather, entirely calculable, in the sense that the loss is a good gamble for Ireland, a speculative risk that banks on a specular return of identity. As an *Irish Times* obituary concludes, after making Beckett distinctly non-Irish by comparing him to T.S.Eliot, D.H. Lawrence, Kafka, Céline, and Racine, "Though Ireland hurt him when he was a young man, he retained a deep attachment to this country: his work, especially in its humour, has an unmistakable Irish accent. We should be proud, and grateful. Through him, we speak" ("Samuel Beckett").

This dynamic of attachment at a distance is also described by Derrida's theory of articulation (*Grammatology* 65-73). Referring in the contexts of expression and construction to a method of simultaneously joining and separating, articulation is one of the terms Derrida uses to describe how signification produces meaning through difference and deferral. The site of articulation is the interval between the same and the trace of the other that both enables and disables presence and identity, inhabiting such concepts and rendering them different from themselves. It offers an image--the "hinge," or *brisure*, both a join and a break--for the non-concept of *différance*, which refers to this conceptual process whereby identity conceived across a distance is always both divided and delayed from arriving at itself.[2] An articulated subject sacrifices its autonomy by existing on both sides of the hinge that at once holds it together and keeps it apart. The hinge simultaneously attaches and detaches not only the signifier and the trace of other signifiers upon which its meaning depends, but also provides such an always-provisional link between the self and its others, presence and absence, present and past and future. With this image of articulation, Derrida indirectly recalls the position described by Heidegger in "Letter on 'Humanism'" as "the jointure of being" (272), the space or clearing of existence in which the future-oriented subject of becoming is most itself when most far from itself, projected always ahead of itself. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger describes *Da-sein* as "essentially ahead of itself" (373) because it exists in a state of incompletion. *Da-sein* stands out from itself as it projects itself toward the future, anticipating its possibilities, and anticipating completion of its possibilities in the always-imminent death that paradoxically provides it with a sense of wholeness and irreplaceability (221-23).[3] Also constructed across a hinge of articulation, existing at a distance from itself, is Nietzsche's "sovereign" subject, whose sense of presence and self-sameness, as I will go on to examine in relation to the eternal return, is divided by a promissory projection of himself into the future. Nietzsche describes this subject as "the most spacious soul, [. . .] the existing soul which plunges into becoming; [. . .] the soul fleeing from itself which retrieves itself in the widest sphere" (*Thus* 225-26).

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[2] As Derrida has described it, *différance*, a neologism always under erasure, contains the sense of both deferment and difference but is irreducible to either. Undefinable as either a word or a concept, a signifier or a signified, a noun or a verb, it refers to a condition or function of signification, to "the possibility of conceptuality, of a conceptual process and system in general." It is "the non-full, non-simple, structured and differentiating origin of differences" which produce meaning, but it eludes determination as something that already "is" either present or original. Discussing the interval of articulation and the trace that establishes and divides the present, Derrida adds: "It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called 'present' element [. . .] is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not" ("Différance" 11-13).

In the rhetoric of mourning in Ireland, the hinge of articulation describes self-construction through attachment to an other encrypted by a country whose independence is made possible, and impossible, by dependence. The opening obituary for the *Irish Independent* explains, accordingly, that while Beckett "died a literary giant" and was "one of the pillars of the towering structure of modern Irish literature," the "begrudging attitude of the Irish towards genius at home" meant that he only ever "rose to that stature as an exile" ("Beckett"). The pillars of home are constructed away from home.

For Freud, the game of *fort-da* is an attempt to control the sense of lost presence experienced by such an articulated subject. The child tries to master mourning by repeatedly "staging the disappearance and return" of the lost object in the form of a reel thrown away and retrieved on a string. Through symbolization and re-enactment, he aims actively to take control of the previously uncontrollable and passively experienced absence and presence of his mother (*Beyond* 13-16). Beckett's Irish obituarists join in. The author of alienation and expulsion is alternately expelled and retained, exiled and repatriated, disseminated and monumentalized. If Ireland speaks through Beckett, as the *Irish Times* says, it gains a voice through the writer's voice, which is given a position comparable to that of Heidegger's uncanny "call of care" or conscience (*Being* 247-77) that comes both from within and without, urging the subject into exile from itself as it projects it toward possibilities. Calling *Da-sein* "back to itself" by "calling [it] forth," the call "summons" it toward an authentic, future-oriented, articulated existence of "being-toward-death" (*Being* 264, 213-246).

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[3] Heidegger explains the apparent paradox of *Da-sein*'s sense of unity even in a condition of projection and becoming by positing death as an end that is constantly experienced as a constitutional part of existence. Death is the anticipated horizon of our projections which "limits and defines the possible totality of *Da-sein*" (*Being* 216). Yet this end "which concludes and defines being-whole" is "not something which *Da-sein* ultimately arrives at only in its demise." Rather, death is "always already included" (239) in our sense of ourselves, as long as we exist in a state of authenticity.

Christopher Ricks, in his obituary for the *Sunday Times,* describes Beckett as the representative writer of "an age which has found one of its most urgent anxieties to be the definition of death," and which through this anxiety has "created new possibilities and impossibilities even in the matter of death." For Derrida, the failure to mourn is the condition of possibility of mourning, as well as the condition of its impossibility. This aporia, which he describes in *Mémoires*, involves an oscillation between two kinds of memory: *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis*. *Erinnerung* is an interiorizing memory that defines the coherent self by its ability to assimilate and fully contain a lost other. Its aim is similar to what Freud described in 1915 as "the work of mourning," the process through which we sever our attachments to the lost one by taking them into ourselves. In this way we preserve them inside us until they can finally be declared "dead," "abolished," after which the unfettered ego continues to live in the knowledge that the loved object "no longer exists" (Freud, "Mourning" 255-57).

Freud's description, Derrida notes, has commonly led to descriptions of "normal" mourning as "an interiorizing idealization [that] takes in itself or upon itself the body and voice of the other, [. . .] ideally and quasi-literally devouring them" (*Mémoires* 34). "In normal mourning, if such a thing exists," he explains,

> I take the dead upon myself, I digest it, assimilate it, idealize it, and interiorize it. This is what Hegel calls interiorization which is at the same time memorization--an interiorizing memorization (*Erinnerung*) which is idealizing as well. In the work of mourning, the dead other [. . .] is taken into me: I kill it and remember it. But since it is an *Erinnerung*, I interiorize it totally and it is no longer other. ("Roundtable" 58)

Reduced to being the same as the mourner's self, the lost one's trace is overcome, its otherness extinguished and absorbed as an integrated part of the mourner's own borders of identity. These borders of self are not only secured but expanded as a result of such an adoptive interiorization.

The subject of *Erinnerung* that thinks itself capable of assimilating necessarily thinks of itself as complete, self-enclosed. *Gedächtnis* arrests this sense of completion. Derrida's understanding of *Gedächtnis*, a term also borrowed from Hegel, follows from the notion of the trace. As an exteriorizing memory, *Gedächtnis* defines the self not by its ability to interiorize a lost other, but by its relation to an other outside, whose alterity can never be fully contained. Insisting on the relation of interdependence through which the inside "is" the outside (Derrida, *Grammatology* 30-65), *Gedächtnis* both enables the thought of interiorization and makes it impossible.[4] This "thinking" memory, or memory of "inscription" and difference, "disrupts the simple inclusion of a part within the whole." It recalls to thought "the other as other, the non-totalizable trace which is in-adequate to itself and to the same. This trace is interiorized *in* mourning *as* that which can no longer be interiorized, as impossible *Erinnerung*, in and beyond mournful memory--constituting it, traversing it, exceeding it, defying all reappropriation" (*Mémoires* 38, emph. Derrida's).

While the existence of the other is necessary for the self to be conceived at all, the possibility of its death, and its absence, is equally crucial in conceiving of a self that remembers. We define and delimit the sense of a separate self (a self capable of carrying within it, in "terrible solitude," the memory of a lost one) precisely through the experience of an other "who can die, leaving in me or in us this memory of the other" (*Mémoires* 33). The other "appears *as* other, and as other for us, upon his death or at least in the anticipated possibility of a death, since death constitutes and makes manifest the limits of a *me* or an *us* who are obliged to harbor something that is greater and other than them; something outside of them within them" (34). The Freudian view of mourning, Derrida suggests, posits a self that does not come into existence or acquire meaning without this possibility. The death of the other (or rather, the anticipation of its death) comes "before" us, in the double sense of an anticipated future that occurs, conceptually, in advance of the self. As a condition of possibility for conceiving such a self, the possible loss of the other is a future that lies paradoxically both ahead of and behind us. It is an event that can only prove the existence of our borders in retrospect, but it allows us to conceive of them now through anticipation of its occurrence. This conception of the sealable borders of self through the possibility of containing a lost other who will "no longer exist except *in* us" means, for Derrida, that "a 'self' is never in itself or identical to itself." Rather, it is a "specular reflection [that] never closes on itself," because it "does not appear *before* this *possibility* of mourning" which "constitutes in advance all 'being-in-us,' 'in-me,' between us, or between ourselves" (28). We are constituted only through this anticipatory relation to the absence of an other who we aim to assimilate but who, precisely because of this necessary relation, "defies any totalization" (29) and can never be fully contained or declared dead. The other through whose death we anticipate self-enclosure simultaneously ensures that we cannot achieve it.

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[4] Derrida's subheadings in this section of *Of Grammatology*--"The Outside and the Inside" and "The Outside Is the Inside"--point to the hinge articulated by the unheard difference between "est" and "et."

The ambivalence of this contradiction, in which we aim to be rid of the other through whom our existence is both established and threatened, can be traced back to Freud's association of identification with cannibalism in a work of mourning where the desires to preserve and destroy coincide. In "The Ego and the Id" (1923), Freud suggests that "the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes and [. . .] contains the history of those object choices" (29). This history is one of conflict. The ego is constructed in part through identifications, which Freud defines in *Group Psychology* (1921) as "the original form of emotional tie with an object"--a tie in which, prior to sexual object-choice, one takes another "as a model" or "ideal" (*Group* 37-39).

Identification, which “plays a part in the early history of the Oedipus complex,” is “ambivalent from the very first.” It involves the desire simultaneously to emulate and replace the father--“to grow like him and be like him, and to take his place everywhere”--and it “can turn into an expression of tenderness as easily as into a wish for someone’s removal.” In its contradictory desire to both keep and reject, preserve and destroy, identification “behaves like a derivative” of an equally ambivalent phase, “the first, *oral* phase of organization of the libido, in which the object that we long for and prize is assimilated by eating and is in that way annihilated as such” (*Group* 37).

In “Mourning and Melancholia” (1917 [1915]), Freud had called this “the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development” (249). This essay describes identification as a “preliminary stage of object-choice, [. . .] expressed in ambivalent fashion”--a stage “in which the ego picks out an object.” The ego “wants to incorporate this object into itself, and, in accordance with the oral or cannibalistic phase of libidinal development in which it is, it wants to do so by devouring it” (249). Melancholy, Freud suggests, is unsuccessful, abnormal or “pathological” mourning, in which decathexis from the lost object fails to occur. The ego fails “to sever its attachment to the object that has been abolished” (255); it fails to become “free and uninhibited” (245) by accepting the verdict of the reality principle that the loved object “no longer exists” (244, 255). Instead, the melancholic disavows the loss and withdraws it from consciousness (245, 257). Rather than being liberated and displaced on to another object, the libido is “withdrawn into the ego” (249), and an object-cathexis is replaced by an identification. The melancholic subject, that is, deals with its ambivalence for an object it loves but by which it has also been abandoned by taking the relationship into itself and playing it out as a psychic conflict.[5] In this process, Freud explains in *Group Psychology*, the ego becomes "divided, fallen apart into two pieces, one of which [the critical agency] rages against the second [the ego]" (*Group* 41-42). As he puts it in "Mourning and Melancholia," "an object-loss is transformed into an ego-loss and the conflict between the ego and the loved person into a cleavage between the critical activity of the ego and the ego as altered by identification" (249). The ego effectively stands in for the object and internalizes its own ambivalence by turning criticism against itself. The object is thus reproduced and preserved, yet attacked, through this conflict in which "self-reproaches are reproaches against a loved object which have been shifted away from it on to the patient's own ego" (248). As "the shadow of the object [falls] upon the ego," the ego is judged by the critical agency as though it were the lost object (249). In a dynamic I analyze further in relation to "melancholic revolt" and the hunger strikes, external relations are repeated in this scene of incorporation and self-punishment where one wants both to sever one's ties to the object by rendering it the same as oneself (declaring it dead) and to maintain the tie by refusing to acknowledge its loss (preserving it alive).

As Judith Butler has noted, while Freud aims to maintain a distinction between mourning and melancholy in this essay, the distinction remains unclear, and the two processes appear to merge in his later texts, most notably "The Ego and the Id" (Butler

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[5] In melancholia, the sense of abandonment extends "beyond the clear case of a loss by death," and includes those in which one has been "slighted, neglected or disappointed" ("Mourning" 251). It includes, as Freud remarks in *Group Psychology*, either "real or emotional loss of a loved object" (*Group* 41).

172). While in the first essay the process of identification marks a crucial difference between mourning and melancholy, in "The Ego and the Id" Freud qualifies this distinction by noting that identification is more "common" and "typical" than he previously assumed ("Ego" 28). In fact, in conjunction with his claim that the ego is composed of the history of its abandoned object choices, he suggests here that "it may be that this identification is the sole condition under which the id can give up its objects" ("Ego" 29). For Butler, this apparent interdependence between the full work of mourning and the identifications of melancholy alters what it means to let go of the lost object. In *The Psychic Life of Power*, she reiterates her earlier view, introduced in *Gender Trouble*, that Freud's remarks in "The Ego and the Id" imply that "the giving up of the object is not a negation of the cathexis, but its internalization and, hence, preservation" (*Psychic* 62). Freud allows for the possibility that, because "melancholia makes mourning possible" (*Psychic* 170), it is always a part of mourning. If so, the attachment to the object is never finally broken. "There can be no ego without melancholia," she argues, because loss constitutes the ego as the condition of its possibility (171). Because the ego is "composed of its lost attachments, [. . .] there would be no ego were there no internalization of loss along melancholic lines" (193). What occurs in mourning, Butler concludes, is thus not an abandonment but rather a transfer of the object's status from external to internal: "Insofar as identification is the psychic preserve of the object and such identifications come to form the ego, the lost object continues to haunt and inhabit the ego as one of its constitutive identifications. The lost object is, in that sense, made coextensive with the ego itself" (134). It therefore cannot be let go. While arguing that there is "no final reprieve from the ambivalence and no final separation of mourning from melancholia" (193), Butler returns us to the ways in which Freud had already begun to collapse this distinction toward the conclusion of the first essay, where he notes that there is "an essential analogy between the work of melancholia and of mourning." "Just as mourning impels the ego to give up the object by declaring the object to be dead and offering the ego the inducement of continuing to live," he writes, "so does each single struggle of [melancholic] ambivalence loosen the fixation of the libido to the object by disparaging it, denigrating it and even as it were killing it" ("Mourning" 257, qtd. in *Psychic* 192).

While Butler's analysis differs from Derrida's, both resist the distinction between mourning and melancholia in order to argue that mourning is interminable. Butler describes a condition of possibility similar to that which Derrida describes, through the interdependence of interiorizing and exteriorizing memory, as an incorporation of the other that constitutes the self. Butler indicates this connection by citing Derrida's view that "'mourning is the affirmative incorporation of the Other,' and that, in principle, there can be no end to mourning" in the context of her conclusion on the impossibility of severing one's attachment to alterity (qtd. in *Psychic* 195). Both suggest, in different terms, that the ego comes into being through what Butler calls "a loss that cannot be thought, cannot be owned or grieved, which forms the condition of possibility for the subject" (*Psychic* 24). "Survival," Butler insists, "is a matter of avowing the trace of loss that inaugurates one's own emergence. To make of melancholia a simple 'refusal' to grieve its losses conjures a subject who might already be something without its losses, that is, one who voluntarily extends and retracts his or her will" (195). To avoid this assumption, she maintains that

> from the start, this ego is other than itself; what melancholia shows is that only by absorbing the other as oneself does one become something at all. [. . .] The ego comes into being on the condition of the 'trace' of the other. [. . .] To accept the autonomy of the ego is to forget that trace; and to accept that trace is to embark upon a process of mourning that can never be complete, for no final severance could take place without dissolving the ego. (196)

Yet where Butler tends to limit the formation of melancholy subjectivity to a relation with the past, Derrida focuses instead on the deferral of the past into an always-anticipated future. He emphasizes the promissory or contractual character of impossible mourning as a future-oriented project of failed retrieval through which a subject is haunted by the absence of itself in the future as well as in the past and present. Dividing the self, *Gedächtnis* renders mourning a project of deferred identity, presence, and signification. The self formed by mourning is only ever on the way to completion, because it is thought on the basis of an other whose interiorization is perpetually, and necessarily, deferred. The complete work of mourning--independence through assimilation and introjection of the other--is only ever anticipated, or promised. As a recognition that the past will always be irretrievably other, *Gedächtnis* is the condition of possibility, and impossibility, of *Erinnerung*. It both enables and disables the thought of full presence, and projects identity into the future by promising a self that "will have been" capable of assimilating the dead. As Derrida explains, in this conceptual structure "there is only the promise and memory, memory as promise, without any gathering possible in the form of the present" (*Mémoires* 145).

This contractual condition allows only for what he describes in "Foreword: *Fors*," as an undecidable saving of the dead other "on the borderline" between introjection (conceived as successful mourning in which decathexis is achieved by acknowledging and symbolizing the lost object) and incorporation (conceived as melancholic disavowal of loss and preservation of the lost object as a psychic effect) (xvi). His insistence that "everything is played out on the borderline that divides and opposes the two terms" (xvi) is both an interpretation of Abraham and Torok's theory of the crypt in *The Wolf Man's Magic Word* (1976) and a response to their previous distinction drawn in "Introjection--Incorporation: *Mourning* or *Melancholia*" (1972). In this essay, they aimed to separate melancholia clearly from the concept of mourning, marking the difference through these terms which Freud uses interchangeably in *Group Psychology* and "The Ego and the Id." They associate mourning with introjection, and melancholy with incorporation. Melancholics, they argue, are unable to acknowledge their loss. They do not learn "to fill the void of the mouth with words," to make "the transition from breast-filled mouth to word-filled mouth," as happens in the process of introjection. Their empty mouths are devoid of the consolations of a language that covers over or "makes up for [an] absence by *representing* presence," a language in which "the absence of objects become[s] words" that effectively "replace the mother's presence and give rise to new introjections" (5-6). As they disavow the loss of the object, and fail to "declare" its death, they instead incorporate the dead in a crypt. Such an incorporating containment of the other as other occurs when an introjecting assimilation of the other as the same fails: "When introjection proves impossible, [. . .] the decisive transition to incorporation is made at the point when the mouth's words do not succeed in filling the subject's emptiness, so he fills it instead with an imaginary *thing*" (6-7). "Grief that cannot be expressed," they add, "builds a *secret vault* within the subject," and "in this crypt reposes--alive, reconstituted from the memories of words, images, and feelings--the objective counterpart of the loss, as a complete person with his own topography" (8).

In his 1979 colloquium discussion on the same subject, Derrida reiterates what he describes in "Foreword" as the undecidability of this in-between image. He interprets encryption as a process of arrested, incomplete or impossible mourning, in which the other is kept both dead and alive, both within and without, incorporated inside while remaining outside of the mourning subject. "Not having been taken back inside the self, digested, assimilated as in all 'normal' mourning, the dead object remains like a living dead abscessed in a specific spot in the ego," in a crypt or pocket where it "continues to inhabit me, but as a stranger" ("Roundtable" 57-58). The crypt, as a restless grave or pocket that is always inside out, is thus positioned in an undecidable space on the borders of the mourning subject. Between incorporation and introjection, the lost one resides in the crypt as a stranger, undigested, on an indeterminate threshold.

As a way toward presence undermined by its own conditions of possibility, the "aporia of mourning," Derrida adds in *Mémoires*, is an experience "where the possible remains impossible. Where *success fails*. And where faithful interiorization bears the other and constitutes him in me (in us), at once living and dead." But if the success fails, the inverse is equally true: "the *failure succeeds*." An encryption that fails to fully interiorize the other succeeds in the sense that "an aborted interiorization is at the same time a respect for the other as other, a sort of tender rejection, a movement of renunciation which leaves the other alone, outside, over there, in his death, outside of us." The other that we bear in us, "like an unborn child, like a future," is "a *part* of us" apart from us (*Mémoires* 35, emph. Derrida's). Derrida goes on to cite Paul de Man, who argues, in "The Literary Self as Origin," that the impossibility of assimilating or presenting the past "supplants the naive illusion that memory would be capable of conquering the distance that separates the present from the past moment." For de Man, this impossibility means that "memory becomes important as failure rather than as achievement" (89-90, qtd. in *Mémoires* 57). To this Derrida adds, "The failure of memory is thus not a failure; we can also interpret its apparent negativity, [. . .] its experience of discontinuity and distance, as a power, as the very opening of difference" (*Mémoires* 57-58).

Beckett--with whom Derrida has felt a discontinuous "identification" through "texts which are both too close to me and too distant for me even to be able to 'respond' to them" (*Acts* 60)[6]--writes about the success of failure in most of his texts, which describe narrators mourning the loss of themselves. For these narrators, every word functions as their own epitaph in what Derrida calls elsewhere "a tropology of memory in autobiographical discourse *as* epitaph, as the signature of its own epitaph" (*Mémoires* 25, emph. Derrida's). In "First Love," Beckett's narrator, "having lunched lightly in the graveyard" where his father is buried, anticipates the inscription on his own gravestone: "Hereunder lies the above who up below / So hourly died that he lived on till now" (*Collected* 25-26). As Lloyd has suggested, this epitaph recognizes "that death is recurrent in the structure of subjectivity, and life a continual dying, and a dying in every moment" (*Anomalous* 47). The narrator offers his own criticism: the last line "limps a little," he reflects, "but that is no great matter, I'll be forgiven more than that when I'm forgotten. Then with a little luck you hit on a genuine interment, with real live mourners and the odd relict trying to throw herself into the pit" (26-27). Yet he is already one of those "real live mourners" in the sense that his life is his death, that his "living on" consists of "hourly dying" as he constructs an identity hinged to the possibility of its own extinction. As Beckett's Malone dies, too, he feels he is "being given [. . .] birth to into death"; he is both created and killed by his notes which he notes "have a curious tendency to annihilate all they purport to record" (*Malone* 391, 351). And the Unnamable also destroys himself while establishing himself with a rhetoric that disables its own aim, always failing to arrive at the essential "I" that his words post-ulate into existence: "I, say I. [. . .] I seem to speak, it is not I," he begins, and ends famously, "I'll go on, you must say words, as long as there are any, until they find me, until they say me, [. . .] I can't go on, I'll go on" (*Unnamable* 401, 577).

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[6] Introducing his inability to "respond" in the same interview, Derrida says of Beckett: "This is an author to whom I feel very close, or to whom I would like to feel myself very close; but also too close. Precisely because of this proximity, it is too hard for me, too easy and too hard. I have perhaps avoided him a bit because of this identification" (*Acts* 60).

But "no matter. Try again. Fail again. Fail better" (*Worstward* 89). This is Beckett's affirmative response to the problem in *Worstward Ho*, where a narrator struggles to speak himself and his creations not into but out of existence, to escape from words by "worsening" them, making them fail until nothing remains. Yet he fails to fail. Like the woman from *Ill Seen Ill Said*, whose mourning condemns her to return repeatedly from "the inexistent centre of a formless place" (*Ill* 50) to the tomb of a lost one, he is condemned by his words to return to "the bones" of a body--bones that "prey" on the "remains" of a mind that will register pain and so prompt the body into action: "First the bones. On back to them. Preying since first said on foresaid remains" (*Worstward* 96). Like the reluctant body he describes, the narrator is similarly pained into the act of writing. He is preyed upon by his words which refuse to fail in that they cannot be consumed or extinguished. As in the case of the Unnamable, his words become "remains" to which he is bound to return in an endlessly repeated ritual of impossible mourning: forever "preying since last worse said on foresaid remains" (*Worstward* 105). To fail to fail is perhaps to make failure succeed: to fail better. It is also to feel better, in the sense that an illusion of self-presence is briefly found by failing to mourn the other who both enables and disables that feeling. Ireland fails better, too, by constituting itself in relation to the always-exiled other. As Joyce's Stephen Dedalus puts it, anticipating his departure from Ireland "to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race" (*Portrait* 276), "the shortest way to Tara [is] *via* Holyhead" (273). Ireland arrives at itself through the detour of death: it is most itself when most far from itself, its presence deferred by the thought of its absence. While Holyhead is the Welsh port closest to Dublin, the Tara to which Stephen refers here is the seat of the pre-Norman high kingship of Ireland. It is a complex of forts and monuments, including a passage grave and burial mounds, constructed around a stone foundation pillar called the *Lia Fáil* (or *Fál*) from which Ireland takes one of its names: *Inis Fáil* (the "island of *Fál*"), whose "[pillar] of the towering structure of modern Irish literature," as the *Irish Independent* describes Beckett, is built abroad.

2. Return

Ireland's impossible mourning for its writers, to recycle a phrase Beckett liked to recycle, is "nothing new."[7] Yeats's obituarists enacted the same discourse in 1939. Admitting that Yeats was caught between English and Irish traditions, the *Irish Times* concludes that "passionate patriotism was never so liberally displayed by Yeats as during the earlier years in London." It was "in a London street," after all, "that he heard 'lake water lapping . . . on the shore' of Innisfree" ("Death" 8).[8] Though living in voluntary exile for much of his life, Yeats was always more Irish because of it. Lennox Robinson of the Abbey Theatre, interviewed for an obituary in the *Irish Press*, insists that Yeats "was passionately Irish--Irish, from his first meeting with John O'Leary thirty-five years ago; Irish in his work as a Senator of the Irish Free State; Irish to the last day of his life" ("Life"). The *Irish Independent* remembers a poet whose writing "soar[ed] beyond national frontiers [to] become part of the patrimony of English poetry," yet also reinscribes Ireland's paternal frontiers by claiming him as the most important of "our Irish writers" who "died out there far from his native land," and by quoting Robinson's assessment of him as "one of [Ireland's] greatest sons" ("Poet"). The paper then continues to prey on Yeats's remains by devoting an entire second obituary to the need to disinter his body and bring it home from France to be re-encrypted, a need that mirrors what R. F. Foster has described as a "battle over [Yeats's] literary remains" in British and Irish obituaries (177). (Buried first at Roquebrune, Yeats's body was transported nine years later by the Irish Navy and reinterred at Drumcliff churchyard, under Ben Bulben.)

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[7] Beckett reiterates *Ecclesiastes*' "there is no new thing under the sun" (1.9) in the opening line of *Murphy*: "The sun shone, having no alternative, on the nothing new" (1).

[8] Yeats describes this experience in *Autobiographies* 153.

The irony of Ireland's unstable articulation of itself by encrypting Yeats is enhanced if we remember that Yeats had already inscribed his own epitaph in "Under Ben Bulben," a poem that both emphasizes the impossibility of a complete work of mourning--"Though grave-diggers' toil is long, / Sharp their spades, their muscles strong, / They but thrust their buried men / Back in the human mind again" (*Collected* 398)--and concludes with a statement of anticipated death in life by casting the future in the present:

> In Drumcliff churchyard Yeats is laid
> [. . . . .]
> By his command these words are cut:
> *Cast a cold eye*
> *On life, on death.*
> *Horseman, pass by!* (*Collected* 400-01)

Yeats had also promoted what he called "Unity of Being" through a vision of history and identity in which "every phase returns" (*Vision* 206) as all things are eternally "dying each other's life, living each other's death" (68, 197, 271). As Yeats made clear, his vision borrows not only from Heraclitus but from Nietzsche, whose theory of eternal return contains elements of articulated identity and impossible mourning.

The influence of Nietzsche's theories of eternal return, the will to power, self-overcoming, sovereignty, and objective and subjective states of existence on Yeats has been traced by Otto Bohlmann and Frances Nesbitt Oppel. Yeats's admiration for Nietzsche, whom he called "that strong enchanter" (qtd. in Oppel, *Yeats* 42), began with his reading of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, *The Genealogy of Morals*, and *The Case of Wagner* in 1902 (Oppel, Yeats 44), and continued as he appropriated many of Nietzsche's ideas into his major theoretical work, *A Vision*, published first in 1925 and revised in 1937. In this text, which outlines a theory of the dynamics of history, civilizations, and personality, Yeats represents the increasing and decreasing dominance of opposing but interdependent forces as, amongst other images, the waxing and waning of a lunar cycle. The movement toward the full moon at phase fifteen approaches what Yeats calls "Unity of Being." At the personal level, "unity" is a condition of extreme subjectivity, individuality, and creativity--a place of affirmative self-fulfillment, as opposed to the alternative extreme of objective self-effacement and absorption in a communal consciousness of absolute submission to God. In "The Phases of the Moon," the 1919 poem that introduces *A Vision*, Yeats describes the twelfth phase, later called the self-assertive "phase of the hero" (*Vision* 127), as one in which "Nietzsche is born" (*Vision* 60).

Yeats also associates Nietzsche with his image of the gyres, the "fundamental symbol" of *A Vision*, consisting of two interpenetrating and reverse-directional cones of

Concord and Discord which correspond to the phases of the moon and follow the same rhythm of expansion toward subjectivity and contraction toward objectivity.[9] In *On the Boiler* (1938), for example, Yeats refashions the gyres as an hourglass, recalling Nietzsche's description of the eternal return as "the eternal hourglass of existence [which] is turned upside down again and again" (Nietzsche, *Gay* 273). For Yeats, as for Nietzsche, this movement involves a repeated process of "transvaluation": "When a civilization ends, task having led to task until everybody was bored, the whole turns bottom upwards, Nietzsche's 'transvaluation of values'" (*Boiler* 25). Connections between gyres of history, the eternal return, and revaluation appear throughout Yeats's work. In Nietzsche's *Zarathustra*, Zarathustra's animals combine the image of an hourglass with that of a temporal wheel, describing the doctrine of eternal recurrence as "a great year of becoming" which "must, like an hour-glass, turn itself over again and again, so that it may run down and run out anew" (237). In the process of eternal return, they insist, "everything goes, everything returns; the wheel of existence rolls for ever. Everything dies, everything blossoms anew; the year of existence runs on for ever" (234). "Every phase returns," Yeats echoes in *A Vision*, "therefore in some sense every civilisation" (206); "the cycles in their vast array begin anew" (243). Accordingly, the Great Wheel, which Yeats calls his "Principal Symbol" (67), and which summarizes the movement of his theoretical oppositions, containing and reproducing the cycles of the gyres and the lunar phases in multiple subsets and parallels, is also described by Yeats as a great year of history, which lasts approximately 26,000 years and is divided into twelve "months" of approximately 2,200 years each.

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[9] "If we think of the vortex attributed to Discord as formed by circles diminishing until they are nothing," Yeats explains, "and of the opposing sphere attributed to Concord as forming from itself an opposing vortex, the apex of each vortex in the middle of the other's base, we have the fundamental symbol of my instructors" (*Vision* 68).

Nietzsche defines the notion of eternal return as "the unconditional and infinitely repeated circular course of all things" (*Ecce* 273), and as the thought of "existence as it is, without meaning or aim, yet recurring inevitably without any finale of nothingness" (*Will* 35). To endure this "terrible" thought (*Will* 35) of a passage of time that moves toward no ultimately definable goal and provides no determinate meanings, one needs to revalue it as a positive condition, a condition of becoming, in which one creates both meaning and purpose for oneself, yet always provisionally. As Nietzsche puts it in his notes on eternal return collected in *The Will to Power*:

> Means of *enduring* it: the revaluation of all values. No longer joy in certainty but in uncertainty; no longer 'cause and effect' but the continually creative; no longer will to preservation but to power; no longer the humble expression, 'everything is merely subjective,' but 'it is also our work!--Let us be proud of it!' (545, emph. Nietzsche's).

Powerful revaluations are enacted by creative individuals who joyfully affirm repetition rather than responding to it with an attitude of nihilism. "Did you ever say Yes to one joy?," Zarathustra asks of the 'Higher Men' in one of his final speeches, "O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe as well, [. . .] if you wanted one moment twice, if ever you said: 'You please me, happiness, instant, moment!' then you wanted everything to return!" (*Thus* 332, emph. Nietzsche's). As a creative individual, Zarathustra aims to say "yes" to the freedom as well as the contradictions of the eternal return, in which one is obliged repeatedly to destroy not only conventional truths but, through an awareness of the ephemerality of all truths, to anticipate destroying one's own creations as well: "That I have to be struggle and becoming and goal and conflict of goals," he exclaims, "ah, he who divines my will surely divines, too, along what crooked paths it has to go! Whatever I create and however much I love it--soon I have to oppose it and my love: thus will my will have it" (*Thus* 138).

As Nietzsche shows in his analyses of subjectivity and history--and in spite of his apparent insistence on identical repetition and sameness--joyful affirmers of identity are both willing and obliged to continually re-create themselves. To affirm "that which must return eternally" is also to affirm "a becoming that knows no satiety, no disgust, no weariness," a "*Dionysian* world of the eternally self-creating, the eternally self-destroying" (*Will* 550). The search for sovereignty and affirmation is a paradoxical search for identity through a future-oriented relationship to death, or non-identity. Zarathustra aspires to a state from which he might cry, "I shall return, [. . .] *not* to a new life or a better life or a similar life: I shall return eternally to this identical and self-same life" (237, emph. Nietzsche's). Yet the "self-same life" to which he wants to return is also a life divided from itself as soon as its identity is articulated through a promissory projection into the future. It is a life "fleeing from itself" to retrieve itself "in the widest sphere" (226). Through a dynamic of commitment to which I turn in the following chapter, his self-sameness is both constructed and broken by the internal division implied in promising oneself to oneself. It is an identity that bears its own death, like "all great things [which] bring about their own destruction through an act of self-overcoming" (*Genealogy* 3.27). Like Ireland in the obituaries, that is, Nietzsche's sovereign subject--the "*sovereign individual*, like only to himself, . . . who has his own independent, protracted will and the *right to make promises*" (*Genealogy* 2.2)--establishes himself through self-sacrifice: "We all bleed at secret sacrificial tables, [. . .] and I love those who do not wish to preserve themselves. I love with my whole love those who go down and perish: for they are going beyond" (*Thus* 217). In what Derrida calls the irreducible "sameness of *différance* and repetition in the eternal return" ("Différance" 17), the sovereign establishes his borders by going beyond them, deferring the proof of his presence by stringing out his will with the promise to return, to repeat himself later, and so to demonstrate that his identity endures. Stretching his identity out over time and "stand[ing] security for *his own future*" (*Genealogy* 2.1, emph. Nietzsche's), he stands out from himself, constituting himself "through the credit of the eternal return" (Derrida, "Otobiographies" 13), conceiving himself across an interval of *différance*.[10]

As he positions many of his theoretical and poetic statements on the hinge between opposing drives toward unity and division, life and death, sovereignty and sacrifice, Yeats seems to recognize, with Nietzsche, that the call for eternal return does not foster its avowed aim of unity or sovereign sameness at all. "He who attains Unity of Being," Yeats writes in the 1925 text of *A Vision*, "is some man, who, while struggling with his fate and his destiny until every energy of his being has been roused, is content that he should so struggle with no final conquest. [. . .] Such men are able to bring all that happens, as well as all that they desire, into an emotional or intellectual synthesis"; they "receive revelation by conflict" (Harper and Hood 28-29). The "ultimate reality" or "harmony" of complete synthesis beyond the struggle of discord--beyond what Zarathustra experiences as a "struggle and becoming and goal and conflict of goals"--finally seems to be assured, as Yeats writes in the 1937 text, only in a "phaseless sphere" of deliverance from the physical world and from the "cycles of time and space," a sphere "unintelligible to all bound to the antinomies" of human experience (*Vision* 193, 210, 214). Ideal unity with one's opposite is strived for in life, but perhaps only "so far as it is attainable" (81; see also Bohlmann 86-91).

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[10] Derrida focuses on the broken promise of eternal return as an articulation of future-oriented indebtedness to oneself in "Otobiographies." Responding to Nietzsche's prefatory statement in *Ecce Homo*--"I live on my own credit" (*Ecce* 217)--he argues that the divided yet self-affirmative signature establishes an "I" through the pledge to repeat itself, an "I" that "does not exist" as an identity present to itself (13). The name or signature, through which identity is inscribed as a promissory contract, functions as an "*arrêt de mort*"--both a death sentence and a reprieve from death (9). This lecture echoes and anticipates his discussions of the signature, iterability and the promise in "Signature Event Context," "Ulysses Gramophone," and *Mémoires*.

Prior to *A Vision*, Yeats's essays oscillate between confirmation and negation of the possibility of unity in both personal and national contexts. In a 1919 essay, "If I Were Four-and-Twenty," he writes, "I would begin another epoch by recommending to the Nation a new doctrine, that of unity of being" (*Explorations* 280). In "The Trembling of the Veil" (1922), he casts the ideal in the past tense--"I thought that in man and race alike there is something called 'Unity of Being'" (*Autobiographies* 190)--and goes on to say that "the dream of my early manhood, that a modern nation can return to Unity of Culture, is false" (295). Other earlier essays show this oscillation by emphasizing an irreducible struggle. In "The Death of Synge" (1909), the creative assumption of the mask of a second self engenders not resolution but a life of repeated becoming, a "rebirth as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed" (*Autobiographies* 503). In "J. M. Synge and the Ireland of His Time" (1910), Nietzsche's "soul voluntarily at odds with itself" (*Genealogy* 2.18) reappears in Yeats's description of poetic and philosophical nobility as the result of "invisible warfare, the division of a mind within itself, a victory, the sacrifice of a man to himself" (*Essays* 321). And this coincidence of sacrifice with the urge toward synthesis carries through to the imag[illegible] of his late poems, where the phrase "beautiful lofty things" applies in turn to figures of Irish nationalism and the "soul in division from itself" ("Beautiful Lofty Things" and "A Crazed Girl," *Collected* 348-49); where "under every dancer" lies "A dead man his grave" ("A Drunken Man's Praise of Sobriety," *Collected* 360); where the Irish who "know the time to die" know also "that things both can and cannot be," and that the dead, though buried, can keep company with the living ("The Curse of Cromwell," *Collected* 350-51); and where recognition of eternally returning identities "perning in a band" is coupled with division for a speaker inhabited by "those new dead / That come into my soul" ("The Spirit Medium," *Collected* 366). When the *Irish Independent*'s description of Yeats as a poet who "soar[ed] beyond national frontiers" coincides with the conclusion of an *Irish Times* obituary that he was "the outstanding Irishman of our time" ("Death"), the latter's double meaning of distinction and incompletion can be read in emphasis of the way in which for Yeats, as for Nietzsche, the return to one's borders is conditioned by crossing them.

3. Integrity

Two years later, the *Irish Times* accounted similarly for the memory of James Joyce, who died on January 13, 1941. Laying claim to "one of [Ireland's] most highly-gifted sons," the leading obituary argues that Joyce will survive the test of the "cold, searching light of literary history" better than any other of Ireland's "outstanding men of letters." "Like so many other Irishmen--like Yeats," it adds, "this wayward, yet gentle, genius has died in a foreign land at a moment when the very foundations of culture seem to be rocking." If this death in exile emphasizes the instability of cultural foundations, it also reinforces them for the mourning nation. Like Beckett and Yeats, Joyce is given away, placed beyond Ireland's borders by being granted a "place in the history of English prose," a "position [. . .] in world literature," and the status of having written one of "the masterpieces of human thought." But he is also reeled in, on the return of this generous gesture, with phrases like the following, which echoes in advance one of Edna O'Brien's above-cited descriptions of Beckett: "Although he had not set foot on Irish soil for more than twenty years, he hardly ever wrote a line that was not steeped in the atmosphere of his native city." Rendered intelligible in this way, he can then be repatriated and monumentalized as "a magnificent monument to the Dublin of thirty-five years ago," "the complete Dubliner," "an Irishman of the Irish" ("James Joyce," *Irish Times*). Appended to the leading obituary is a piece entitled "James Joyce as Man and Artist: Tributes by Irish Friends." These friends begin to grow anxious about the impossible dynamic of sending and retrieving. They rehearse the story of Joyce as an exile who has "shattered the categories of time and space" (Power), breaking the boundaries of Ireland and Irish writing only to return the Irish to a fuller understanding of themselves. Joyce has taken both Dublin and the nation away from themselves: "Everywhere he went, he carried Ireland and Dublin with him"; his home in Paris was "a Dublin transported abroad" (Reddin). As C. P. Curran puts it, far from being contained by Dublin, he contained it within him: "I once asked Joyce when was he coming back to Dublin. 'Why should I?' he said. 'Have I ever left it?' And, of course, he never really had. He contained Dublin. [. . .] If Dublin were destroyed, his words could rebuild the houses; if its population were wiped out, his books could re-people it."

Such powers of containment, however, carry with them an implicit danger. For while Joyce may enable Ireland to exist affirmatively beyond itself, he comes close to negating that opportunity for himself--and so also, as its all-encompassing representative, comes close to depriving Ireland of the identity he has provided it with. Even as they reach for Joyce as a figure of Irishness, descriptions of him as both representative and container, both part and whole, betray a concern about the enclosure of self-sufficiency more pronounced than in obituaries of Beckett and Yeats. Joyce's obituarists imply that he was not sufficiently apart from himself. He retreated into himself by becoming unintelligible to others, to such a degree that this unassimilable remainder became in turn an impenetrable totality. For writing a book like *Finnegans Wake*--described in the *Irish Times* leader as "that queer, incoherent, unintelligible rigmarole of formless fantasy" ("James Joyce")--Joyce is admired by Reddin as one of the strong who "stand most alone," yet is also criticized for taking up such a position. Adding to Arthur Power's description of Joyce as a man "detached from life, [. . .] detached in his work and detached in his pleasure," Reddin writes: "He stood aloof from other writers, having set them a new fashion in prose. He remained completely islanded in his own consciousness. [. . .] External contacts occurred, but unless they were relevant to the world of Dublin he had created he took no interest in them. [. . .] He was the most detached man I ever knew."

Perhaps because of their will to reclaim Joyce as national property, Irish obituarists treat Joyce's detachment and unintelligibility as a detour only, describing it uneasily as a mark of the difference and "integrity" through which they can paradoxically integrate him as a nationalist representative. "Joyce was a figure apart. It would be easy to exaggerate his apparent arrogance and reserve," writes Curran. But, he explains, "if Joyce seemed arrogant and aloof it was in defense [. . .] of his own integrity--his liberty to think differently." Power makes a similar effort to account for Joyce's isolation, for the fact that he is perhaps both too much apart from Ireland and too little apart from himself: "We have had in Ireland many generous artists who have not hesitated to mix in public affairs. Joyce was not one of them." Yet this lack of generosity was due to his passion "to preserve [the] independence" of his art. While he admits that "the integrity and independence of the artist may be vilified to a catchword," Power aims to recapture its aura by stating simply, "It was the essence of Joyce." These mourners excuse Joyce from the condemnation leveled at his incomprehensibility by several English obituarists, who tend to dismiss Joyce's work as "unintelligible" ("Mr. James Joyce," the *Times*), "obscure," isolated and self-centred ("James Joyce Dead," *Daily Telegraph*), nihilistic ("James Joyce," *Manchester Guardian*), "extravagantly extreme" and incommunicable--

evidence that Joyce was a self-imploded genius who finally "ceased altogether to be fed from outside" (McCarthy, *Sunday Times*). Building on descriptions of this kind, an obituarist for the *Manchester Guardian* compares his self-enclosed independence to Ireland's isolationist neutrality in World War II, an analogy that speaks the contradiction of being apart from Ireland (locked out of it) yet also a representative of it (his lock-out typifies the Irish): "Europe appreciated him and yet he was at last locked out of Europe, as of Ireland, in some secret temple of his own mind, as removed from the great passage of events as his own countrymen are to-day" ("James Joyce").

The choice of the phrase "locked out" recalls Joyce's Leopold Bloom, who is triply locked out: of his home, as a "keyless" wanderer; of his country, as an unassimilably Jewish Irishman; and of Molly's affairs, as a cuckold. The undecidable dynamic of encryption as simultaneous lock-in and lock-out described in Joyce's obituaries shuttles between models of mourning in *Ulysses* and its precursor, "The Dead." In "The Dead," Gabriel's "generous tears" for his wife's mourning of Michael Furey initiate his own communion with Ireland's lost ones. As his soul "approache[s] that region where dwell the vast hosts of the dead," he feels "his own identity [. . .] fading" into communion with them; the falling snow that is "general all over Ireland" and "faintly falling, like the descent of their last end, upon all the living and the dead" forges a bond between the present and the past as well as between all parts of the nation (*Dubliners* 223-24). Gabriel's fading identity has been read by Brannigan as a project that resembles encryption. Brannigan argues that Gabriel is obliged, through Gretta's memory of a lover associated with nationalism, "to recognise love as love for the other" and to "[admit] national identity into his sense of belonging, by communing with the dead and becoming conscious of the alterity of death" (66).

Joyce emphasizes the divisiveness of impossible mourning for the living dead more obviously and affirmatively, however, in *Ulysses*. As Erin Soros has shown, Bloom, who mourns for both his father and his son, is an obsessive encryptor. He is an anxious pocket-checker who keeps various items--including a potato, a bar of soap, and a letter--safe in his stomach- or womb-like pouches: saved, in the double sense of accepting ("save") and excepting ("save" understood as "except for") that Derrida reads into the word "*fors*" (see Foreword xi-xii, tn). Like Bloom's images of Paddy Dignam either spilled from his coffin ("A coffin bumped out on to the road. Burst open" [81]) or buried alive and in need of a telephone ("And if he was alive all the time? [. . .] They ought to have some law to pierce the heart and make sure or an electric clock or a telephone in the coffin" [91]), Joyce is held by his obituarists on the border between introjection and incorporation. He occupies a position of otherness, which arguably situates Ireland in the place of Bloom as described in Derrida's analysis of the scene from *Ulysses* in which "Bloom is at the telephone" (*Ulysses* 113). "[Bloom's] being-there is a being at the telephone," Derrida suggests, "in the way that Heidegger speaks of a being for the death of *Dasein*," where "the called one is precisely this *Dasein*; summoned, called forth, called up toward his possibility of being the most proper (before himself)" ("Ulysses" 40-41). As a contained and uncontainable other with the potential to call the nation back to itself, Joyce remains within while also "fast fading" away from the borders of the mourning nation, like the names in the obituaries column scanned by Bloom before Dignam's funeral: "Inked characters fast fading on the frayed breaking paper. [. . .] Sadly missed" (75). The problem of the name that fades, and of the sense of loss that for Derrida haunts any act of naming, is accentuated by one of these death notices which remembers a man marked by the same alias ("Henry") that Bloom uses in his correspondence with Martha Clifford. The obituary reminds Bloom of the letter from Martha that he is keeping safe in his pocket.

> It is now a month since dear Henry fled
> To his home up above in the sky
> While his family weeps and mourns his loss
> Hoping some day to meet him on high.
>
> I tore up the envelope? Yes. Where did I put her letter after I read it in the bath? He patted his waistcoatpocket. There all right. Dear Henry fled. (75-76)

The encryption of a lost one is linked, through Bloom's association, to the encryption of a name by its bearer--a name that is always, in a sense, a pseudonym. As Derrida argues in *Mémoires* and elsewhere, the name is never the property of its bearer but is kept and pronounced as though it were. Functioning as a shifting and reiterable signifier, it pronounces the self both dead and alive, allowing for both flight from and return to one's "proper" place: "Henry fled / To his home." The name bears the death of its bearer, simultaneously inaugurating life and death, presence and absence, the self both here and gone:

> In calling or naming someone while he is alive, we know that his name can survive him and *already survives him*; the name begins during his life to get along without him, speaking and bearing his death each time it is pronounced in naming or calling, each time it is inscribed in a list, or a civil registry, or a signature. [. . .] Death reveals that the proper name could always lend itself to repetition in the absence of its bearer, becoming thus a singular common noun, as common as the pronoun 'I,' which effaces its singularity even as it designates it. (*Mémoires* 49-50, emph. Derrida's)

Bloom's response to "the deaths" in the paper reinforces the encryption of Joyce-Bloom-Dignam in anticipation of Bloom's discovery, in the same chapter, of the advertisement for "Plumtree's potted meat" which has been mistakenly published in the newspaper's obituaries section: mis-interred. Bloom first reads this advertisement immediately after a passing tram blocks his view of a woman's stocking, making him feel "locked out of it" (61), a sentiment that again places Bloom in the position of Joyce as described in the *Manchester Guardian*. In addition to reminding Bloom of the potting of Dignam's corpse at burial, it makes him think in terms that recall the cannibalistic aspect of encryption suggested by Freud's comparison of melancholic incorporation and identification to the oral phase of libidinal development: "What is home without Plumtree's potted meat? Incomplete. What a stupid ad! Under the obituary notices they stuck it. All up a plumtree. Dignam's potted meat. Cannibals would with lemon and rice" (*Ulysses* 140, 560). As a failure to properly incorporate the dead, the inept misplacement of the advertisement is a misfitting precursor to the positioning of Joyce by his own obituarists.

4. Agreement

While impossible mourning is not new in the language of Irish obituaries for these three monumentalized authors, it is not new either for political declarations of Irish identity from the Proclamation to the Good Friday Agreement, which have reiterated Pearse's claim that living nations constitute themselves by recalling the dead. Yet these recent statements of mourning also offer dissemination, and exhumation, along with their repetition of the discourse that makes Ireland a nation concerned with renewal through death. They position themselves on the hinge that former Social Democratic and Labour Party leader John Hume has called "unity in diversity" (48). They aim toward what Richard Kearney has called "a post-nationalist network of communities" (Introduction 17) that will achieve "a decentralizing and disseminating of sovereignty" (*Postnationalist* 61).

The Good Friday Agreement established a devolved government in Northern Ireland and interrupted a system of direct rule from Westminster in place since 1972, with the exception of a five-month period in 1974 when a power-sharing Executive was established and dissolved. It aimed to address relationships between the North, the Republic, and England by connecting a new Northern Ireland Assembly to broader north-south and east-west institutions, all of which will be "interlocking and interdependent" (171). The Agreement describes its network as a "totality of relationships" (181, 184,

185) consisting of "cross-border" bodies (182-83). These bodies include a British/Irish Council (including members of the British and Irish governments as well as the Northern Irish, Scottish, and Welsh Assemblies) and a North/South Ministerial Council without which the Assembly cannot function (comprised of ministers from the Northern Irish Assembly and the Irish government). The Agreement maintains that these institutions are interdependently linked "on an all-island and cross-border basis" (183) in a way that will "unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions" (174).

On the constitutional issues of identity and citizenship, the Agreement states that the North "remains part of the United Kingdom" (173), but it recognizes the principle of consent (that the North's status as a part of either Britain or a united Ireland depends on a majority vote) and upholds the right to keep both British and Irish citizenship regardless of the outcome of a such a vote (recognizing "the birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose" [172]). To emphasize the principle of majority consent, it alters both British and Irish official claims of sovereignty over the North by way of exchange. It repeals the 1920 Government of Ireland Act, which had imposed the lasting terms of partition for a six-county Northern state and continued to assert Britain's "supreme authority" over the North.[11] It also amends Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. Here it replaces the

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[11] This authority had originally been envisioned over both parts of Ireland. The Act allowed for the creation of two devolved governments in Ireland, both within the United Kingdom. Before the Good Friday Agreement it still applied to the North, which had a devolved but dependent parliament between 1921 and 1972. In the South, the Government of Ireland Act was superseded, but its borders of partition were maintained, when the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty

Constitution's claim to a national territory consisting of the whole of Ireland, which treats reintegration as a "constitutional imperative" (see Hadfield), with a more aspirational recognition of "the will of the Irish nation" for unity and the "entitlement and birthright" (174) of all on the island to Irish identity.[12]

The new 108 member Assembly, with its twelve-member Executive Authority made up of the First and Deputy Ministers and the heads of ten new governmental departments, includes nationalists and unionists. Equal representation of these sides is encouraged by a voting system on major decisions either by parallel consent (requiring a majority of both unionist and nationalist votes) or by weighted majority (requiring 60% of the votes of all members, including at least 40% from each side). The Assembly has power over the "devolved" areas previously run by the six Northern Ireland Government Departments (Finance and Personnel, Agriculture, Education, Health and Social Services, Economic Development, and the Environment),[13] but not over "non-devolved" areas, which include policing, security, prisons, criminal justice, taxation, and foreign policy. These areas are still controlled by the British Government through the Secretary of State,

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established the Irish Free State as an independent state with dominion status in the British Commonwealth rather than that of a less powerful devolved parliament sending MPs to Westminster as the Act had foreseen (Hennessey 19-21), and as the North continues to do.

[12] In Taoiseach Bertie Ahern's often-cited interpretation, the amendment of Articles 2 and 3 redefines the nation "in generous and inclusive 32-county terms by putting people before territory" (qtd. in Hadfield).

[13] These have been rearranged into the Executive's ten departments: Agriculture; the Environment; Regional Development; Social Development; Education; Higher and Further Education; Training and Employment; Enterprise, Trade and Investment; Culture, Arts and Leisure; Health, Social Services, and Public Policy; and Finance and Personnel.

though may possibly be devolved under certain conditions that remain ambiguous in the Agreement. The Agreement also promises to establish commissions on issues ranging from human rights to fair employment to racial equality, proposes policing reform and the accelerated release of prisoners affiliated with paramilitary organizations on ceasefire, and links paramilitary weapons decommissioning to British demilitarization.

While Kearney places greater emphasis on the "European context"--arguing that new institutions should be part of an interdependent "pan-European Federation of regions" where "a proper balance is reached between federal association (at [the] transnational level) and regional self-government (at [the] subnational level)" (*Postnationalist* 61, 182)--the Agreement frequently adopts the language of proposals for postnationalism submitted by Kearney and Robin Wilson to the 1993 Opsahl Commission and the 1995 Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (rept. in *Postnationalist* 75-95). The similarities are particularly marked in the Agreement's focus on a totality of relationships, cross-border cooperation, and the will to unite the population while maintaining respect for a diversity of identities in the North. In the Agreement, unity and diversity, sameness and difference, dissemination and solidarity occur simultaneously as "those who have died" are remembered. Kearney has described this kind of postnationalism as an *Aufhebung* of national identities and memories (Introduction 17; *Postnationalist* 59). It is, he writes, "a transition from traditional nationalism to a postnationalism which preserves what is valuable in the respective cultural memories of nationalism (Irish and British) while superseding them. [. . .] It does not solicit a liquidation of the past but its reinterpretation or *Aufhebung*" (*Postnationalist* 59).

Yet this is the *Aufhebung* that Derrida argues should be "constrained into writing itself otherwise," urged to recognize the irreducible difference of its contradictory meanings ("Différance" 19). Derrida emphasizes the contradictions that trouble interpretations of Hegel's *Aufhebung* as a transcendent process of understanding that preserves and overcomes contradiction by contextualizing opposing terms into a broader governing principle or overall pattern. This is a view of systematic comprehension in a series of stages through which, as Derrida puts it, "a determination is negated and conserved in another determination which reveals the truth of the former," enabling us to pass "from infinite indetermination [. . .] to infinite determination" ("Restricted" 274). In this understanding of "Hegelian speculation" (276), he writes, "the *Aufhebung* is included *within* the circle of absolute knowledge, never exceeds its closure, never suspends the totality of discourse, work, meaning, law, etc." (274, emph. Derrida's). To unsettle such an impression of closure, he accentuates the sense of difference and delay in the concept of *Aufhebung* (meaning to lift, but also both to negate and conserve) by translating it as *la relève*. While Hegel's term has been translated in English as "sublation," the French verb *relever*, as Alan Bass explains, provides a more accurate translation of its contradictions, in that it means both to lift and to relay, relieve, or substitute for. This translation stresses an alternate sense of supplementarity and difference in the term. It suggests that sublation or transcendence is always deferred, that something is always allowed to escape conceptualization when the double movement of conservation and negation is attempted. Like the texts of Joyce that frustrate his obituarists by appearing "incoherent, unintelligible, [. . .] formless" and "detached," the approach to reading and writing that

Derrida describes here is one that works against the economy of absolute speculation by refusing to make sense or achieve completion. It is one that moves "from a restricted, 'speculative' philosophical economy--in which there is nothing that cannot be made to make sense, in which there is nothing *other* than meaning--to a 'general' economy--which affirms that which exceeds meaning, the excess of meaning from which there can be no speculative profit" ("Différance" 20 t.n).

Crossing between terms of containment and excess, Kearney offers "subla[tion]" (*Postnationalist* 12) "transcend[ence]" (56) and "superse[ssion]" (59) as solutions for Irish identity while also writing them otherwise--adding, for instance, that in a politics informed by deconstruction all "totalizing notions of identity (imperial, colonial, national) are submitted to scrutiny [. . .] in the name of an irreducible play of differences" (62). While contradictory models like Kearney's have been criticized for their approach toward European integration and economic modernization by writers including Lloyd (*Ireland* 81, 107, 124 fn) and Desmond Bell (243-44) in arguments I turn to in the following chapters, Kearney's latter formulation of differences simultaneously gestures toward openings for what Lloyd describes as the emergence of identity narratives that exceed those of nationalism, colonialism, and Europeanization.

The discourse of mourning in Irish writing also crosses the boundaries it seems to establish, becoming an indeterminate rhetoric that resists efforts to use it as a term of containment and submits itself to the possibility of revaluation. If impossible mourning insists on an awareness of what is excluded by every act of limitation, it also reveals the necessity, and possibility, behind the calculated ambiguity of political agreements: an "ambiguous language," on issues ranging from Irish identity to decommissioning and security, that has been alternately disparaged as counter-productive and championed as "constructive" and "creative" by Irish politicians. Referring in March 2000 to talks on the need for IRA decommissioning as a precondition to resuming the suspended Assembly, former Taoiseach John Bruton argued that "the government's policy of constructive ambiguity has reached its limits" (qtd. in "Government"). Ulster Unionist Party leader and First Minister David Trimble insisted similarly that "we can't rely as we did last time on ambiguous language" (qtd. in de Bréadún, "Trimble"). The UUP's Reg Empey, however, has promoted the need for "creative ambiguity" on the same issue (qtd. in Moriarty, "Hard"). Statements of this kind on the relative merits of ambiguity have been repeated throughout negotiations on the Good Friday Agreement. Such ambiguity leads to revision, and to the suggestion, prevalent in political rhetoric during the suspension of the Assembly between February and May 2000, that a new form of words might be found to revitalize the peace process. New forms of words, as well as the recent focus on redefining contexts for implementing the Agreement, leave a totalizing context open to the outside that enables and disables it. Rather than being a problem caused by what is often described as the "intransigence" of all sides, revision may always fail better to prevent the entrenchment of Irishness, as agreements become borders broken open as soon as established, like the utterances of Beckett's *Unnamable*: "affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later" (401). Revising his *Irish Times* obituary on Beckett's remarkable absence and presence, John Banville adds the following comment: "The man himself, the personality, the physical presence, will be missed. It is strange to think of that great head ('the hawklike man') gone. [. . .] I think of him going out bravely, his sense of himself and his place still intact" ("Waiting"). To call Beckett intact is a familiar contradiction. Yet it both makes sense and fails to make sense if we read his intactness, like that of the nation that also mourns Yeats and Joyce, as something always about to be formed.

Chapter 2

Irish Endurance: Commitment and Context

1. Decommissioning

A young Stephen Dedalus in *A Portrait of the Artist* is troubled by the contexts of identity when he reads what he has written in his geography textbook--"himself, his name, and where he was":

> Stephen Dedalus
> Class of Elements
> Clongowes Wood College
> Sallins
> County Kildare
> Ireland
> Europe
> The World
> The Universe

The last line needs another: "What was after the universe? Nothing. But was there anything round the universe to show where it stopped before the nothing place began? It could not be a wall but there could be a thin line there all round everything" (14). His thoughts then shift from the textbook's green globe to the green of his nation, to thoughts of family arguments about Parnell, and to a politics whose borders are as confusing as those of geography:

> That was called politics. There were two sides in it: Dante was on one side and his father and Mr Casey were on the other side but his mother and uncle Charles were on no side. Every day there was something in the paper about it.
>
> It pained him that he did not know well what politics meant and that he did not know where the universe ended. (14)

As recent discourse on the peace process shows, the pain of deciding where contexts end continues to trouble the meanings of politics in Ireland. Since the Good Friday Agreement was signed on 10 April 1998, its potential to provide a sustainable context for reconfiguring national identities in the North has been repeatedly deferred. This deferral has been conditioned in part by the language used in negotiations on decommissioning, the issue that has most persistently prevented the Agreement from being fully implemented.

The immediate success of the Agreement (its being signed at all) was arguably a measure of its deliberate failure to provide unambiguous closure for the issue of disarmament on all sides: by republican and loyalist paramilitaries, as well as by the British forces in Northern Ireland. In 1996, British Prime Minister John Major had insisted on closure by refusing to follow the Mitchell Report's recommendation that decommissioning should be dealt with during rather than prior to all-party talks. This prompted the IRA to end its 1994 ceasefire by bombing London's Canary Wharf. Since then, the repeated reopening and renegotiation of the issue has not prevented acts of violence. The Omagh bombing by the Real IRA four months after the signing of the Agreement (15 August 1998) caused more deaths than any other single incident in

Northern Ireland during the Troubles, and punishment attacks and sectarian killings by paramilitary groups on all sides have continued. Negotiations have, however, prompted a continuation of official ceasefires by the Provisional IRA, and have allowed Sinn Féin to enter the new Assembly.[1] To this degree, deferral has maintained the effects that the demand for closure on decommissioning ostensibly sought yet failed to achieve. Both before and since these events, negotiations have not only focused on terms of commitment and context, but have also frequently tied these terms to statements of mourning. The connection is relevant when we read mourning as a commitment to realize oneself as a stable context--a future-oriented promise to prove capable of containing and accounting for what has been lost. Exceeding the borders of identity it aims to inscribe, the discourse of mourning is a language of unsustainable context and of the failure of any commitment that promises it. Like the promise, and as a promise, it is a conceptual strategy that constructs a sense of self-containment only insofar as it fails to do so. It is a discourse where the pledge of endurance is broken in the act of utterance, where the borders of identity drawn by commitment are left open to the kind of repeated revision prompted by the necessary ambiguity of an Agreement that bears its own death and mourns the loss of itself.

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[1] The status of ceasefires on all sides is notoriously uncertain and remains so at the time of writing (June 2002). While official declarations may signal a will to negotiate, they are of course not always honoured by those who offer them. In September 1998, the Real IRA's ceasefire, which has since ended, left the Continuity IRA and the loyalist Red Hand Defenders (the cover name under which members of the Ulster Defense Association-Ulster Freedom Fighters and the Loyalist Volunteer Force continue to carry out attacks) as the only paramilitary groups not to have officially declared an end to military activity. The IRA had renewed their ceasefire in July 1997. Key members of the disbanded Combined Loyalist Military Command (CLMC) have also declared ceasefires. The UDA-UFF most recently renewed their official ceasefire in January 1998, but after increased violence and murders claimed by the Red Hand Defenders, the Northern Secretary, John Reid, declared on 12 October 2001 that he considered both their ceasefire and that of the LVF broken (this "specification" meant that these groups no longer benefited from the early-release scheme for paramilitary prisoners devised in negotiations since the Good Friday Agreement). In November 2001, the UDA, which the previous July had withdrawn its support for the Good Friday Agreement, disbanded its political wing, the Ulster Democratic Party, whose leaders still supported the Agreement. The LVF (which broke from the Ulster Volunteer Force in 1996, and has links to the UDA-UFF) renewed their ceasefire in May 1998; the republican Irish National Liberation Army followed suit in August 1998. The UVF, which like all groups has been responsible for murders since the Agreement and has been accused of breaking their ceasefire, officially supports the Agreement, and claims to have maintained their ceasefire since the joint CLMC ceasefire of October 1994 in response to the IRA initiative in August of the same year.

The call for a commitment to decommissioning became a life-threatening issue for peace negotiations when it was introduced by Major's administration after the IRA ceasefire of 31 August 1994. The issue is life-threatening in the sense that decommissioning threatens one notion of life with another; it endangers the fullness of agreement with a series of continually "excessive" demands and qualifications, opening it to a life of projection that is the death of life considered as pure presence or completion.[2]

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[2] Derrida thinks of life as death (or "life death") through his theory of the supplement that renders life an always-incomplete project of ek-sistence: "the supplement is dangerous in that it threatens us with death," yet "pure presence itself, if such a thing were possible, would be only another name for death" (*Grammatology* 155). In Derrida's reading of the death drive within Freud's pleasure principle, Freud's "detour" is doubly determined. The reality principle defers pleasure in the service of the life instinct that seeks to reduce or stabilize psychic tensions. Yet this aim becomes indistinguishable from life's detour toward death--toward the pre-organic state in which tensions are abolished--whereby the pleasure principle "seems actually to serve the death instincts" (*Beyond* 77). For Derrida, death "is" the non-original origin and deferral of life conceived as presence. It is also the "proper" state (interpreted as both a Freudian "earlier state of things" and a Heideggerian "relation to one's own death as a condition of authenticity" for *Dasein*) toward which life aims to return (*Post* 354-59). The excessive relation of presence to non-presence for Derrida paradoxically "constitutes the essence of life," so that "life must be thought of as trace before Being may be determined as presence. This is the only condition on which we can say that life *is* death, that repetition and the beyond of the pleasure principle are native and congenital to that which they transgress" ("Freud" 202-03).

The ceasefire followed a series of events that expanded the usually limited context for negotiations. Gerry Adams' first sanctioned visit to the U. S. in February 1994 followed three years of secret talks between the British government and Sinn Féin (talks initially denied by the British) that led to the Downing Street Declaration of 15 December 1993. The Declaration reiterated the constitutional guarantee, in effect since 1973, that the British government would "uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland" (409).[3] It repeated the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement's emphasis on recognizing a wider context for identity in Northern Ireland, promoting between the people of Britain and Ireland a "totality of relationships" that would respect diversity and "end past divisions" (409, 412), and adding that the British had "no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" (409).[4] It also called for a "permanent end to the use of, or support for, paramilitary violence" before any party would be "free to participate fully in democratic politics" (412). But it did not call for decommissioning. Republicans insist their ceasefire would not have happened in such a context: "There is no room for manoeuvre," Adams wrote in *An Phoblacht* on 27 July 1985. "If a surrender of weapons had been imposed as a precondition to peace negotiations prior to the cessation there would have been no IRA ceasefire" (qtd. in Coogan 683).

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[3] The guarantee, in terms of "parliamentary" majority, had been there since the 1949 Ireland Act, which assured Unionists that "in no event will Northern Ireland or any part thereof cease to be part of His Majesty's dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland."

[4] McGarry and O'Leary point out that in this crucially ambiguous clause even the absence of a comma between "selfish" and "strategic" makes a marked difference in the interpretation; it "may be construed to mean that Britain has a non-selfish strategic interest in Northern Ireland" (418). Also, as Adams argues, this statement "fails to say that they have no political interest" (*Free* 191).

It was only after this ceasefire that the context of the Declaration was exceeded by further demands. At that point, as Tim Pat Coogan describes it, the "toxic admixture" of decommissioning was "injected into the peace process," "stuck [. . .] like a poisoned knitting needle in an elbow joint" by Major's government, which, increasingly dependent on Ulster Unionist support in the House of Commons, needed a strategy for deferring the negotiating process that was read by many unionists as a betrayal (674-78). Coogan's metaphor has been echoed by McGuinness, who argued at a 2000 Easter Commemoration in Dublin that "decommissioning was deliberately injected into the peace process as a stalling mechanism" (qtd. in *Irish Times*, 24 April 2000), and by Adams, who has called British guarantees to unionists "the virus that has infected the process" (qtd. in Cullen). It has also been adopted and redirected by David Trimble, who described Adams' offer of support for his persuasion of unionists toward the Agreement as "a poisoned chalice" (qtd. in Coogan 716). The insistent recitation of these otherwise unintentionally connected metaphors evokes Derrida's reading of the *pharmakon*: the writing that is both poison and cure, supplement and origin--at once a corruption of, and the only possible strategy for recovering or representing the supposedly self-present truth of speech. The failure of writing to achieve such a recovery produces an endless process of further repetitions and failures. In terms of commitment and context, the life-threatening force of the *pharmakon* is the deceptive con that inhabits any promissory contract. It is the contagious yet constitutive lie that breaks any commitment to establish an enduring identity. This is a reading Derrida prompts by linking his discussion of writing as *pharmakon* in "Plato's Pharmacy" to his analysis, in "Signature Event Context," of the iterative and orphaned structure of writing as a condition that Plato resisted ("Signature" 316).

The relevance of the *pharmakon* to the socio-political scene of Northern Ireland's Agreements is also accentuated through its other meaning as "scapegoat," the representative of otherness and evil that is "constituted" and "maintained" from within the city only to be cast out of it in order to provide an other in opposition to whom communal boundaries can be reinscribed. The necessary other as a pharmakos that both constitutes and divides the present is, like the encrypted lost one in mourning, kept both inside and outside, incorporated and introjected, both threatening and preserving the state's borders: "The ceremony of the pharmakos is thus played out on the boundary line between inside and outside [. . .]. The origin of difference and division, the pharmakos represents evil both introjected and projected. Beneficial insofar as he cures, [. . .] harmful insofar as he incarnates the powers of evil" ("Plato's" 132-33). The other produced by and exiled from the negotiating table in the case of Major's initial demand for decommissioning was at that time most obviously Sinn Féin. After Sinn Féin entered government the scapegoat continued to be also the threatening other of all "extremist" republican and loyalist organizations. These included paramilitary groups like the Real IRA (linked to the 32-County Sovereignty Committee), the Continuity IRA (linked to

Republican Sinn Féin) and the UDA-UFF (linked until November 2001 to the Ulster Democratic Party).[5]

If the decommissioning issue itself can be read as a *pharmakon*, then the details of this poisonous supplementarity are enacted through terms of commitment and context. The Mitchell Report on decommissioning emphasized the need for commitment in its first recommendations of 1996: "To reach an agreed political settlement and to take the gun out of Irish politics, there must be commitment and adherence to fundamental principles of democracy and non-violence. Participants in all-party negotiations should affirm their commitment to such principles. Accordingly, we recommend that the parties to such negotiations affirm their total and absolute commitment" to democracy, disarmament, and peace. Other groups also insist on the term. On 11 February 2000, the Assembly was suspended after Trimble threatened to resign as First Minister because of the IRA's failure to decommission by a deadline of 12 February. Trimble chose this deadline to coincide with the next scheduled report on paramilitary arms from the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD). After a three-month period of suspension, during which Northern Ireland returned to being ruled directly from Westminster, a deal was reached between former Assembly members and the British and Irish governments on 5-6 May 2000. The IRA offered to have their weapons dumps inspected and monitored by the IICD. In exchange, the two governments agreed to restore the Assembly by 22 May, and to aim for full implementation of the agreement--

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[5] Before its dissolution in November 2001, the UDP had no seats in the new Assembly, while the UDA-UFF's loyalist rival, the UVF, was represented in the Assembly by the Progressive Unionist Party's Billy Hutchinson and David Ervine.

including moves on actual disposal of weapons by the IRA and corresponding gestures of demilitarization by the British--by June 2001. (The promised date for restoration was postponed until 30 May after Trimble, who had trouble convincing his party to re-enter the Assembly along with Sinn Féin on the basis of the IRA's offer, narrowly kept his leadership majority by 53% against 47% at a 27 May Ulster Unionist Council meeting). Responding to the Joint Government Agreement to restore the devolved institutions, Adams recognized the commitment of Irish and British politicians. Accordingly, the IRA's official statement on the offer of weapons inspections also begins by addressing the issue of commitment: "The leadership of the IRA is committed to a just and lasting peace. We have sustained that commitment" (6 May 2000). Sinn Féin and the IRA have of course been often accused of breaking such promises, as has Trimble, who after asking repeatedly for what he has called a "clearer, less coded [. . .] commitment" from the IRA was criticized by Ian Paisley for promoting their new offer and "go[ing] back on the pledges and commitments he has given" to unionists (qtd. in Moriarty, "Any").

What Paisley calls "going back" on a promise is often explained by reaffirming the connection between commitment and context indicated in the Good Friday Agreement. The IRA, for example, have continually redeployed the Agreement's language of context to their own advantage. The crucially ambiguous passage that allows them to do this reads as follows:

> All participants accordingly reaffirm their commitment to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations. They also confirm their intention to continue to work constructively and in good faith with the Independent Commission, and to

> use any influence they may have, to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within two years following endorsement in referendums North and South of the agreement and in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement. (191)

Recalling the last phrase of this passage, the IRA informed the IICD on 11 February 2000 that they would consider decommissioning only "in the context of the full implementation of the Good Friday Agreement, and in the context of the removal of the causes of conflict" (IICD Report, 11 February 2000), those causes being British involvement in Irish affairs, but particularly its military presence.[6] The IRA's Brian Keenan summed up this return of decommissioning to its sender at a Milltown Cemetery commemoration service for the 1946 hunger striker, Sean McCaughey: "Do not be confused about decommissioning. The only thing the Republican movement will accept is the decommissioning of the British state in this country" (qtd. in Coogan 674). The reversibility of the requirement to decommission reinforces a point that is crucial to the republican logic of refusing to do so: to surrender their arms unilaterally would be to accept that their weapons are illegally held, and that their war against the British is also illegal. In their view, the British occupation of Ireland is no less illegal, and any demand for decommissioning needs to recognize that demilitarization is also a British obligation (Coogan 674). As Adams puts it, "demilitarization is a necessary step in the process towards a lasting peace. But this process must consider the cessation of violence by all sides in the conflict" (*Free* 177). Reapplied in the IRA's statements since April 1998, the term "context" is rendered different to itself as the context for progress (decommissioning) cuts both ways. It is revealed as a term that has always escaped or exceeded its original conditions of use. This constitutive excess, taken on by the IRA, is already at work in the "excessive" ambiguity of not only the Good Friday Agreement's decommissioning clause but also those clauses in which Britain promises to move toward demilitarization and the devolution of responsibility for policing and justice to the Northern Assembly. The British government promises to "make progress towards the objective of as early a return as possible to normal security arrangements" through a reduction of troops, "the removal of security installations," and "the removal of emergency powers in Northern Ireland," but it will only do so in a way that is "consistent with the level of threat" in the state (192). Its commitment to policing and justice is similarly couched in anticipated contexts, qualified by a series of subordinate clauses and phrases: it remains "ready in principle, with the broad support of the political parties, and after consultation, as appropriate, with the Irish Government, in the context of ongoing implementation of the relevant recommendations, to devolve responsibility for policing and justice issues" (194).

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[6] As *Irish Times* political correspondent Mark Brennock explains, "the reference to the full implementation of the agreement and the removal of the causes of conflict refers in particular to the need for demilitarisation by the British army--the removal of military installations and reduction in troop numbers." This cause of conflict is more directly described in a previous IRA Statement of 24 April 2000: "Our aim is the removal of the causes of conflict in this country. This conflict is produced by British involvement in Irish affairs. The British must accept responsibility for this and deliver the means for change and a durable peace." The assertion that British force is the cause of the conflict is also repeatedly maintained by Gerry Adams in *Free Ireland* and elsewhere: "Violence in Ireland has its roots in the conquest of Ireland by Britain" (49); "Sinn Fein believes that a lasting peace can be achieved by the eradication of the causes of the conflict. We have held up the democratic and universally accepted principle of national self-determination as the route through which that can come about" (186).

The IRA's 11 February 2000 statement to the IICD on its willingness to consider decommissioning in a particular context was designed to save the Agreement on the day it was dissolved. The statement failed. For Unionists, and for Peter Mandelson, then Northern Secretary, it was considered insubstantial. When direct rule was resumed as a result of this view, the IRA responded by breaking off contact with the IICD, arguing that because of Mandelson's decision to bow to pressure from Trimble's resignation threat and suspend the Assembly, they were no longer committed to their previous promise to engage in discussions with the decommissioning body, a promise made on 17 November 1999 to facilitate the formation of an Assembly: "The British Secretary of State has reintroduced the unionist veto by suspending the political institutions. This has changed the context in which we appointed a representative to meet with the IICD and has created a deeper crisis" (IRA Statement, 15 February 2000). But the failure became a success three months later, when the same language succeeded in prompting the restoration of the Assembly. The IRA's promise on 6 May 2000 to have their arms monitored was again offered in a statement that returns the terms of commitment and context to their senders. The "confidence-building measure" of having their arms dumps inspected was offered only in the context of ongoing British demilitarization. They looked to the British and Irish governments to "fulfil their commitments under the Good Friday Agreement and the [5 May 2000] Joint Statement" and to cooperate with the IRA in ensuring the "full implementation" of the Agreement:

> The full implementation [. . .] of what they have agreed will provide a political context, in an enduring political process, with the potential to remove the causes

> of conflict. [. . .] In that context, the IRA would initiate a process that will completely and verifiably put IRA arms beyond use. [. . .] In this context, the IRA leadership has agreed to put in place within weeks a confidence-building measure to confirm that our weapons remain secure.

Nearly six months later, the IRA reiterated its commitment and censured the British for failing to honour theirs: "The leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann is committed to a just and lasting peace. In recent years we have engaged in an unprecedented series of substantial and historic initiatives to enhance the peace process. The record shows that we have honoured every commitment we have made." The same statement recalled the Joint Statement as one in which "the British government publicly and privately committed itself to deal with a range of matters including human rights, equality, justice, demilitarisation and policing" (IRA Statement, 25 October 2000). It was supplemented the next day, after a second round of arms inspections, by the insistence that "this initiative was taken in the context of a series of commitments made by the two governments, especially the British government. To date the British government has not honoured the commitments it entered into. It is not the responsibility of the IRA alone to enhance the peace process. Others also must play their part" (IRA Statement, 26 October 2000). Trimble did play a part four days later by denying, in turn, that the IRA had honoured their promises. He imposed sanctions on Sinn Féin, blocking them from North-South Ministerial Council meetings until they had drawn up deadlines and timetables with the IICD for "reasonable progress" on "actual decommissioning" (Ulster Unionist Council Statement, 29 October 2000). Commenting on this "stupid and unattainable" demand, Adams charged Trimble with breaching the context of the Agreement and breaking his pledge: "He has chosen to step outside that agreement and if he follows through on his threat he will be in breach of the agreement, and in contravention of his pledge of office and of his ministerial code" (29 October 2000, qtd. in Minihan). The next day, McGuinness confirmed the rupture by repeating that Trimble's "antics" were "in clear breach of the spirit and letter of the agreement" (30 October 2000, qtd. in Breen, "Sinn Féin").[7] Trimble then returned in kind to the issue of promises ("[Sinn Féin] will have to start delivering on their agreement promises" [30 October 2000, qtd. in Breen, "Sinn Féin"]), and the IRA responded by saying that they wanted "to reiterate [their] commitment to the resolution of the issue of arms" while pointing again to the "clear and reasonable context" they had provided for putting their arms beyond use: the commitment to demilitarization, policing, and human rights that the British had "not honoured" (IRA Statement, 5 December 2000).[8] After engaging again with the IICD in March 2001 and allowing for a third inspection of arms dumps in May, the IRA continued to insist on this context: the IICD's report of 30 June 2001, which acknowledged that no decommissioning had yet occurred, referred once again to the IRA's "commitment to put its arms beyond use, completely and verifiably, but only in the context of its statement of May 6th, 2000."[9]

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[7] A day earlier, McGuinness had argued that unionists and British politicians opposed to the peace process must not be allowed to "emasculate" the agreement (29 October 2000, qtd. in Minihan). Here he reiterates the phrasing of Patrick Pearse, who declared in "The Coming Revolution" in 1915 that without arms and bloodshed Ireland had "lost its manhood" (99). The comparison indirectly likens the phallic signifier of arms to the Agreement itself, which becomes a substitute for the Irish unity that seems to have been lost.

[8] Coogan considers policing the second "toxic admixture" or rhetoric of deferral that is killing the Agreement. Trimble's call for a "moratorium on policing changes until peace assured" (*sic*) in his 30 October 2000 proposals was the result of unionists' rejection of the Patten plan, recommended by policing commissioner Chris Patten in September 1999 as part of the Agreement's promise to reform the system. The plan aimed for equal Catholic and Protestant representation in a new and reduced "Police Service of Northern Ireland" that would retain the Royal Ulster Constabulary name and symbols only on the "title deeds of the bill," but not for "operational" purposes where the service "interfaces" with the members of the public (Millar, "Police"); the plan also aimed to establish new policing boards and administrative structures comprised of nationalist, unionist, and independent politicians, and to limit the flying of the

As the demand for decommissioning is reiterated through these terms as a republican demand for British demilitarization, the Agreement is prevented from arriving at its full implementation. Discussions of commitments and contexts since the May 2001 arms inspections eventually led the IRA to make two gestures of what unionists had long

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Union Jack on police stations and government buildings. The DUP, who have argued that the Patten Commission itself ruptured its context by "breach[ing] the terms of reference given to it by the Belfast Agreement," sought in turn to rupture the context of the Agreement (or, as Paisley has often put it, to "wreck the agreement") by insisting that both the working and legal name of the new force be "The Police Service of Northern Ireland (Incorporating the RUC)" (qtd. in de Bréadún, "Ulster"). They asked, that is, for their past to be incorporated in the symbols of the future, as the RUC's Ronnie Flanagan recognized when he assured unionists that "the dead" would be not forgotten but rather monumentalized to "form the cornerstone" of the new service (qtd. in Unsworth, "RUC"). They threatened, if this were not possible, to turn their unassimilable alterity into the destructive force which, for some, it had always been. In spite of the fact that the subtitle was retained as part of the new service's legal rather than operational name, however, the PSNI was eventually formed in November 2001 and endorsed by the DUP along with all other major Northern parties except for Sinn Féin, who proved to be the unassimilable element in this case by not taking up their seats on the new Police Board.

[9] The other groups engaged with the IICD have, in turn, outlined the contexts under which they too might begin putting their arms beyond use. In their report for June 2001, the IICD noted that the UVF "will not consider decommissioning before they know the IRA's intentions and hear their declaration that the war is over," and that the UFF would find it "difficult to discuss decommissioning further" until members of their organization (including Shankill Road commander Johnny Adair) were released from prison (IICD Report, 30 June 2001). After the IRA's second act of decommissioning in April 2002, unionist and loyalist leaders were still indicating that a corresponding gesture of putting the smaller arsenals of UVF and UDA weapons beyond use remained unlikely (Breen, "Loyalists").

referred to as "actual" decommissioning, on 23 October 2001 and 8 April 2002. These remarkable decisions followed from the commitment made by the IRA in May 2000 and prompted complementary gestures of demilitarization by the British. The twin gestures were crucially affirmative political events in response to increasing local and international pressure on the IRA, including the exposure of IRA involvement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in August 2001, the globalized "war on terrorism" since September 11 2001, allegations of the IRA's responsibility for a break-in at Belfast's Castlereagh police station in March 2002, and the anticipation of Irish general elections in May 2002. Subsequent elections and negotiations, however, showed that full implementation of the Agreement remained far from completion. Focusing on the events leading up to the first gesture of decommissioning on 23 October but also anticipating the effects of a terminology that has continued to both trouble and motivate the peace process since then, I go on to argue in this chapter that, like the discourse of mourning of which they are always a part, the meanings of commitment and context are repeatedly redirected against themselves. Where at first they seem to ensure endurance and consistency, the kind of political rhetoric described above both recognizes, and resists recognizing, that they are also terms of projection that endure the excess and sacrifice of presence.

2. *Revaluation*

Where mourning turns on itself, a revaluation of values occurs. Itself a theory of what is made possible at the point of articulation between conflicting contexts of interpretation, revaluation functions accordingly as a hinge between the ideas of Foucault and Derrida. Foucault focuses on revaluation as a place of "emergence" where new possibilities of conceptualization rupture previously dominant or homogenous discourses, forcing those discourses to be recontextualized. Derrida's reading of the same process as an example of iterability shows that such revaluations are always already occurring--that apparently homogenous discourses are never in place in the first place. In fact they undermine the possibility of such a "first place." He shows at the level of the speech act that what Foucault calls "the violent or surreptitious appropriation" of the rules of discourse ("Nietzsche" 151) is a strategy of resistance not secondary to but built into the rules themselves. Both readings allow for the fact that power and resistance are mutually constitutive conditions of each other's possibility and impossibility--that "there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight," and that "power implies a strategy of struggle" where "each constitutes for the other a kind of permanent limit, a point of possible reversal" (Foucault, "Subject" 794).

The coincidence of both theorists' ideas on the limits of "context" allows for a broadening out of what have often inaccurately been considered their limits: Foucault's materialism, and Derrida's textuality. It prompts a recognition of the material effects of Derrida's linguistic analyses and the linguistic basis of Foucault's focus on discursive materiality, while also providing the background for an understanding of the displacement and overlap of provisional historical limits addressed by both. The rhetoric of the peace process combines an insistence on context and commitment with an insistence on commemoration. As elements of impossible mourning, these terms become tools for redirection. Responding to the repositioning of borrowed vocabularies in this rhetoric, I aim in this and the following chapter to draw Foucault's thinking on context and repetition toward an analysis of impossible mourning, while linking textuality to its historical and political effects. As I bring Foucault's terms into the context of mourning, I arguably repeat an appropriation already performed by this rhetoric. I follow prevalent statements into a differently configured terminology that is not identical with its models but has instead become a language of and on the peace process, a language that exceeds the borders of these thinkers of context and acquires its features by echoing them illegitimately.

In emphasizing the convergence of Foucault and Derrida in Nietzsche, I figure Nietzsche as their point of articulation not in order to emphasize the priority of a precursor, but to orient them toward the theory of the sovereign promissory subject which occupies that hinge and which operates, like the discourse of Irish republicanism, where mourning, promising, and revaluation converge. This theory of subjectivity helps to accentuate the relevance of Foucault's terminology to a work of mourning traced most explicitly by Derrida. While Foucault concentrates on certain aspects of Nietzsche (emergence and appropriation) and Derrida emphasizes others (contractual subjectivity, commitment and affirmation), both develop these ideas, as Nietzsche does, into theories of discontinuity. Insofar as Irish commemorative rhetoric renders their terms of mourning and revaluation different to themselves, it takes advantage, as my own analysis of citations does, of the reiterability that each of these theorists recognize as the condition of their own statements.

After reading Nietzsche's sovereign "promise" and Foucault's "emergence" as conditions of revaluation, I turn to a Derridean reading of revaluation to emphasize that it is a process enabled by the failure to mourn. Foucault offers an understanding of repetition and revaluation as producers and products of genealogical inquiry, while Derrida prompts us to recognize them also as producers and products of promising. Together they help to explain why the rhetoric of decomissioning is so frequently cast as a promise to remember, in the contexts of both the individual subject (in its promissory trajectory toward returning to its self-same existence) and the nation (in the promise to rediscover Ireland as a 32-County Republic).

For Foucault, the place of confrontation between borders of meaning is an "interstice," a site of "emergence" where new interpretations become possible. The latter term is taken from Nietzsche's theory of the emergence (*Enstehung*) of recent valuations of concepts such as good and evil through "conceptual transformation" (*Genealogy* 3.4, 3.5). Once a term denoting noble strength and power, "goodness" has been revalued by Jewish and Christian systems of morality, both of which produce the self-punishing soul of *ressentiment*, to mean just the opposite: weakness, humility, "suffering," "piety," "common" (1.7, 1.4). Thus "the aristocratic value-equation (good = noble = powerful = beautiful = happy = beloved of God)" has been inverted, so that "the powerful and noble, are now on the contrary the evil, the cruel, the lustful, the insatiable, the godless to all eternity" (1.7).[10] The same kind of inversion occurred when punishment was revalued from a "festive," "active, strong, spontaneous, aggressive" (2.7, 2.11) practice of revenge and infliction of suffering for its own sake to a tool for reactive salvation, self-rehabilitation, and self-discipline (where justice becomes recoded as law [2.11]). But in spite of being criticized by Nietzsche for its privileging of weakness over power and its self-punishing turning-inward of the will to power, this inversion is a form of power in itself. The Jews whom he criticizes for initiating "*the slave revolt in morality*" (1.7) have nevertheless "brought off that miraculous feat of an inversion of values" (*Beyond* 195), and so have demonstrated the ability to destroy, transfigure, and recreate--an ability that the sovereign subject, born out of the contradiction of the self-punishing soul, will later seize and celebrate as the will to power, wielding his knowledge like a hammer and imposing his own forms on the world (*Beyond* 259, 260). Nietzsche's continually contradictory revaluations and destabilizations of his own hierarchies, that is, render the slave revolt itself "a subduing, a becoming master," an enabling will to create values that is part of the sign-chain of interpretations and adaptations (*Genealogy* 2.12). The revolt is a part of "the entire history of a 'thing,' an organ, a custom" whose "'evolution' [. .] is thus by no means its progressus toward a goal," but rather a series of chance redirections of meaning initiated by an epistemological will to power. Hence Nietzsche's "important proposition" on historiography, in which he argues that "the cause of the origin of a thing and its eventual utility, its actual employment and place in a system of purposes, lie worlds apart," and that through the imposition of powerful reinterpretations "any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated" (2.12).

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[10] "One should ask [. . .] precisely *who* is 'evil' in the sense of the morality of *ressentiment*. The answer, in all strictness, is: *precisely* the 'good man' of the other morality, precisely the noble, powerful man, the ruler, but dyed in another color, interpreted in another

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fashion, seen in another way by the venomous eye of *ressentiment*" (*Genealogy* 1.11).

Emergence occurs at the limit between such systems of valuation. It is "the entry of forces, [. . .] their eruption" as part of an "endlessly repeated play of dominations" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 149-50). As the appearance of new forms through reinterpretation, it is also, in the context of the Good Friday Agreement, a place of possibility from which previously excluded voices may be heard.[11] Foucault implies this view of voicing in his reading of genealogy as a "dissociative" view that "opposes itself to the search for origins" ("Nietzsche" 140), uncovering discontinuities and heterogeneity in previously assumed histories of continuous development. In his description of emergence in the interstice between opposing discursive formations, he describes marginality leaping momentarily onto the stage of conflict:

> Emergence is thus the entry of forces; it is their eruption, the leap from the wings to center stage, each in its youthful strength. What Nietzsche calls the *Entstehungsherd* of the concept of goodness is not specifically the energy of the strong or the reaction of the weak, but precisely this scene where they are displayed [illegible]perimposed or face-to-face. It is nothing but the space that divides

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[11] The implied parallel here to postcolonial "emergences" is one I extend in Chapter Four in relation to historical contexts and Homi Bhabha's reading of melancholic revolt. Foucault's use of "emergence" can be read in conjunction with Bhabha's description of emerging performative positions and histories in opposition to the pedagogical, as well as his description of mimicry and hybridity as a site of displacement and active resistance, a place where "other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority--its rules of recognition" ("Signs" 156). As the focus of a genealogical strategy, it also evokes Spivak's claim that "the arena of the subaltern's persistent emergence into hegemony must always and by definition remain heterogeneous to the efforts of the disciplinary historian" (qtd. in Young 161).

> them, the void through which they exchange their threatening gestures and speeches.

Emergence, he adds, "designates a place of confrontation but not as a closed field offering the spectacle of a struggle among equals. Rather, as Nietzsche demonstrates in his analysis of good and evil, it is a 'non-place,' a pure distance." Emergence "always occurs in the interstice" (149-50). Such a continual succession of confrontations subverts epistemological, historical, and ontological stability. It reveals "the heterogenous systems which, masked by the self, inhibit the formation of identity" (162).

The relevance of this theory to political declarations of Irish identity is accentuated by claims that republican and unionist reappropriations of the Agreement's language of context have ruptured its limits, undermining its authority and coherence. This is a rupturing that Foucault might call an "event": "not a decision, a treaty, a reign, or a battle, but the reversal of a relationship of forces, the usurpation of power, the appropriation of a vocabulary turned against those who had once used it" ("Nietzsche" 154). Such an event occurs, in this case, as political groups take advantage of what Derrida (also borrowing from Nietzsche's revaluative sign-chains) calls the necessary iterability of the signifier. By inverting and redirecting terms of commitment and context, they enact the disruptive force that comes from every sign's necessary possibility of failing to reach its prescribed destination. By "inscribing or *grafting* it into other chains," they show that "a written sign [always] carries with it a force of breaking its context," that "no context can enclose it" or guarantee its limits of use and meaning ("Signature" 317, emph. Derrida's). Deferral of the decommissioning issue through reiteration has, as I have suggested, contributed to opening a place in the Assembly for a party previously shut out from government and censored by broadcasting bans in both Britain and Ireland. Sinn Féin has perpetuated the deferral during periods when official ceasefires have remained tentatively in effect, working its voice into the foreground by re-using rather than refusing state-sanctioned terminology on the issue. The voices of Sinn Féin and the IRA have now both arguably become part of the official rhetoric of the Agreement. Yet the strategy of reiteration and indeterminacy through which such a repositioning occurred suggests that it may continue to be used to the advantage of others who are also officially accounted for but inadequately addressed by the document. These groups might include the labour movements, women's organizations, and ethnic minorities whose interests are incommensurable with those of mainstream nationalism, and who seek to displace the constraints imposed by the republican and unionist discourse that still dominates discussions of the Agreement.[12] As I go on to argue, the resistances of iterability at work within discourse can be recognized also by political figures in the contradictions of their promissory rhetoric. Whether acknowledged or disavowed, iterability suggests insistently that the ostensible goals of determinacy (including familiar calls for the need to "address" the concerns of the public and achieve "an end to violence") may be approached more effectively and openly through the enabling failure of detours and non-arrivals rather than the frequently reductive insistence on ends.

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[12] In *Ireland After History* and *Anomalous States*, Lloyd focuses on the incommensurability of nationalist logic with "other possible modes of subjectification" (*Ireland* 27) including those organized around class, gender, and the interests of minority ethnic communities. His focus builds on that of many recent analyses of alternative movements in Ireland, such as Luke Gibbons' *Transformations in Irish Culture*, which discusses the "allegorical" force of such organizations through a history of agrarian protest movements and racialized discourse in Ireland; Edna Longley's *From Cathleen to Anorexia*, which is frequently cited in discussions of the conflict between feminism and nationalism; and the essays by David Miller, James Anderson, Robbie McVeigh, Sarah Edge, Desmond Bell and Bill Rolston in *Rethinking Northern Ireland*.

3. Endurance

Criticizing Trimble's decision to prevent Sinn Féin from taking part in North-South Ministerial meetings until they had moved on decommissioning, the SDLP's Brid Rodgers reiterated a now-familiar sentiment: "Nobody has the right to rewrite the Good Friday Agreement" (qtd. in Breen, "Sinn Féin"). Any such promissory contract is rewritten as soon as inscribed, however, because the making and breaking of contexts is always a part of the promise made possible only by its perpetual failure to honour itself. Because it commits the speaker to remaining the same as him- or herself in order to honour it later, the promise establishes an enduring entity with stable borders. But those contextual borders can only be inscribed across the interval that insists on their relation to other contexts that allow them to be thought and prevent them from achieving independence. If commitment both makes and breaks context, it becomes an affirmatively ambiguous rhetoric. It disrupts a tendency in the language of political negotiations to impose the kind of conceptual violence that promotes those entrenched political positions that can lead to concrete violence, as in the breaking of the 1994 IRA ceasefire. To return to Foucault, this inherent instability in the language of commitment allows for "violence to be inflicted on violence" in the alternative form of emergent forces that expose the contingency, provisionality, incoherence and lack of finitude that characterize any set of discursive rules. It allows heterogeneity to resist those apparently homogeneous rules by showing that they are "empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized" ("Nietzsche" 151). A focus on the contradictions of commitment, then, offers a detailed reaffirmation of the 1996 statement of the Mitchell Commission: "what is really needed is the decommissioning of mind-sets in Northern Ireland."

Nietzsche recognizes that commitment promises to preserve identity, but he points also to the paradox of sameness and difference in what is often described as "the commitment to change"--a promise repeated by Adams, for example, at an Easter 2000 Sinn Féin conference: "The Good Friday Agreement is all about change. Let's have that change manifest itself. [. . .] Let's renew ourselves at Easter" (qtd. in Moriarty, "Agreement"). For Nietzsche, this kind of contradiction is fundamental to the possibility of promising. The ability to remember oneself, to be accountable, is learned and enforced through "mnemotechnics," the term he uses to describe how the threat of punishment creates memory for those who promise, and how pain, or "the terror that formerly attended all promises, pledges and vows on earth," remains effective as a "powerful aid to mnemonics" (*Genealogy* 2.3). The fear of being punished if one fails to remember one's obligations, as well as the feeling of indebtedness or guilt, is played out in contractual relations between creditors and debtors (3.4). This system of endurance (in the double sense of consistency and suffering) has been turned inward to form the self-contradictory subject of *ressentiment* (2.16), who becomes his own debtor and creditor, punishing himself because he can never fully repay the debt of original sin. Through revaluation, however, this negative inward turn becomes affirmative in the long run. The self-punishing "soul voluntarily at odds with itself" is capable of giving rise to "an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation" (2.18). It becomes what Nietzsche calls "the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena" (2.18), a womb "pregnant with a future" (2.16). That future is the sovereign subject, who says "yes" to the internalization and self-sacrifice out of which he was born. Reinterpreting the terms of inward guilt and responsibility as an ecstatic privilege rather than a burden, the sovereign establishes the internalized promise as an empowering act of independent will. He emerges as someone who, along with the right to make promises, has "the right to affirm [him]self" (2.2) and has mastered the situation of extending his identity through the credit of eternal return.

Yet his mastery also consists of recognizing that this is a lie, that the pledge to return does not ensure self-sameness. Again, the con-tract operates on the supplementary logic of the *pharmakon*, whereby the writing that poisons and corrupts full presence is paradoxically used as a remedy for itself. Here the poison of promising is prescribed as its own antidote, just as for Beckett's Unnamable writing is used as a means to arrive at a place beyond the corruptions of writing. The essential self at which the Unnamable seeks to arrive is an authentic "I" that lies "in the silence" whose location beyond words is only conceivable within them. He anticipates speaking himself into a place beyond speaking, into a silence where he will have finally arrived at himself: "he's in the silence, he's the one to be sought, the one to be, the one to be spoken of, the one to speak, but he can't speak, then I could stop, I'd be he, I'd be the silence." But while he imagines a place at the end of his efforts, his continued obligation to "speak of the silence" means that any thought of it, and any thought of an unmediated self, is always no more than another beginning of a ceaseless failing better to find a place beyond words, which are all he has: "it will be I, it will be the place, the silence, the end, the beginning, the beginning again, how can I say it, that's all words, they're all I have, [. . .] the words fail, the voice fails, so be it" (575-76). The paradoxical obligation to repeat one's way toward a place beyond repetition is also recognized ironically by Nietzsche: "I shall repeat a hundred times; we really ought to free ourselves from the seduction of words!" (*Beyond* 23). The sovereign's identity is similarly conceived as a project of failure. He is born out of a self-punishing contradiction that continues to plague him, and which reappears as the internally divisive promise of himself to himself.

To be bound to a promise is to be caught in this bind where identity is both assumed and sacrificed by self-affirming words that can never quite coincide with their speaker but always promise to arrive there soon, projecting their implied origin into the future. While this is the condition of the Unnamable, who cannot speak of himself, it is also the problem experienced by Malone, one of the Unnamable's avatars, who admits that his own memory fails to repeat himself because each utterance recreates him in every instant. Malone supports a theory of accountability at first while discussing his account of himself as another in the form of his fictional character, Saposcat: "A minimum of memory is indispensable, if one is to live really." Yet in the next instant he excuses himself, equivocally, from this requirement of identity between himself and the signer: "But as far as I myself am concerned, the same necessity does not arise, or does it? And yet I write about myself with the same pencil and in the same exercise-book as about him. It is because it is no longer I, I must have said so long ago, but another whose life is just beginning" (283-84). Rather than proving consistency, the promise proves only that commitment is always a performative utterance hung on the hinge between being and becoming. While promising to stay true to his word (or truer than words) in all following moments of self-affirmation, Nietzsche's sovereign also affirms, like Malone, that "existence begins in every instant" (*Thus* 234). Possessing what Nietzsche calls the historical sense that opposes the search for origins, he doubts "that it is I who think, [. . .] that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause" (*Beyond* 16). His promise implies that "there is no 'being' behind doing, effecting, becoming," that "'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed" (*Genealogy* 1.13). His repeated "yes" to the eternal return can be heard as a "yes" to division as well as unity, a yes to this need for any performative statement of identity to reiterate itself.

The promise is thus doubled as both a burden of responsibility and a joyful affirmation of unaccountability, where each sense haunts the other.[13] It is also doubled as it initiates a debt to the self through performative self-projection, always anticipating a second yes that will prove the endurance of the speaking subject able to recall itself to its contract. In every signature or affirmation "there is the sense of *yes*, this is my name, I certify this, and, yes, yes, I will be able to attest to this again, I will remember shortly, I promise that it is really I who signed. A signature is always a *yes*, *yes*, the synthetic performative of a promise and a memory conditioning every commitment" (Derrida, "Ulysses" 46). There is therefore always a "desire for memory and [. . .] mourning implicit in the word *yes*" (44), because it is constituted by the threat that "the moment of its production is irremediably lost," that its origin (the implied subject: both sender and receiver of self-affirmation) can always be "lost on the way" (Derrida, "Signature" 317, 321). This "necessary possibility of failure" that constitutes the structure of the mark anticipates the death of the subject to which it refers. The sovereign's right to make promises is a right, not to presence, but to repeatedly different reconstitution of an ephemerally posited and unreachable signified. His utterance gives him birth and death in the same instant. The trace of otherness that obliges him to exist beyond his own borders is also "the arche-phenomenon of memory" (*Grammatology* 70) through which the spoken self destroys the speaker. As Beckett reminds us, "memories are killing" ("The Expelled," *Collected* 46).

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[13] The "ambiguity of the double *yes*" is a hinge between the inward soul of *ressentiment* and the externalized non-identity of the sovereign: "one of them returns us to the Christian assumption of one's burden, the *Ja, Ja* of the donkey overloaded as Christ was with memory and responsibility, and the other light, airy, dancing, solar *yes, yes* is also a *yes* of reaffirmation, of promise, of oath, a *yes* to eternal recurrence. The difference between the two yeses, or rather between the two repetitions of the word *yes*, remains unstable, subtle, sublime. One repetition haunts the other" (Derrida, "Ulysses" 53).

An endurance of death through commitment is recognizable in the sense of loss that accompanies commitments to disarm. A renunciation of violence tends, most simply, to involve mourning for those martyrs whose cause is now being betrayed. While the message was different, and interpreted by some as a form of surrender, the timing of the IRA's 6 May 2000 agreement to weapons inspections imitates that of Brian Keenan's defiant comments on decommissioning at the commemoration for Sean McCaughey. It was scheduled for announcement one day before the annual commemoration march for the 1981 hunger strikers on the anniversary of Bobby Sands's funeral (a scheduling that anticipated Adams' choice to deliver a speech at Westminster entitled "The Political

Legacy of the 1981 Hunger Strike" on the day of the IRA's 23 October 2001 decommissioning gesture). Speaking at the commemoration, the same one during which he argued that a unified Ireland could stand as the only fitting monument to the dead, Gerry Adams accounted for the contentious issue of inspections by assuring his audience that it did not mean surrender, that "the IRA which was not defeated in thirty years of war is not going to let itself be defeated in the course of a peace process" (qtd. in "Thousands March"). In addition to "a complete cessation of military operations," the IRA's 31 August 1994 ceasefire statement added similarly, "we remember all those who have died for Irish freedom, and we reiterate our commitment to our Republican objectives." The CLMC ceasefire statement that followed on 13 October also made the incorporative gesture: "In the genuine hope that this peace will be permanent we take this opportunity to pay homage to all our fighters, commandoes and volunteers who have paid the supreme sacrifice. They did not die in vain. The union is safe" (qtd. in Bew and Gillespie 297). And the 1996 Mitchell Report again linked its recommendations to a statement of mourning: "Surely the continued suffering and bereavement of individuals and of families should never be forgotten. But if the focus remains on the past, the past will become the future, and that is something no one can desire."[14] Yet while the promise to disarm breaks a commitment to the cause of the past, it also breaks its own promise, or mourns its demise in advance, by inscribing itself with the possibility of its repetition otherwise. Accordingly, the claim by the UUP's John Taylor that, on the second anniversary of its signing, the Good Friday Agreement was "dying" due to broken promises (qtd. in "Two-Year-Old") is often repeated in various ways: Coogan, for example, sees questions of decommissioning and policing as "nail[s] in the coffin of the Agreement" (712) and criticizes the tendency of the public "to whistle past the graveyard which was being prepared" for it (720), while Trimble has warned that promises made on policing could "deal a fatal blow" to the Agreement (qtd. in Unsworth, "Mandelson").

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[14] While it urges that mourning be completed and a decathexis made from the past, this statement might also be read as a reappraisal of what de Man describes as a Hegelian teleo-logic through which knowledge seeks to arrive at its source in the future, proceeding in order to think its way back to itself. De Man describes this project as one in which the natural I is assumed by and sought through the unnatural "I." Presence is sought through, and so follows, its representation: "Thought is proleptic: it projects the hypothesis of its possibility into a future in the hyperbolic expectation that the process that made thought possible will eventually catch up with this projection" ("Sign" 770). The postulated subject, sent to itself, will be found, like truth, through repeated non-truths.

The duplicity of the broken promise emphasizes the way in which mourning can be considered a part of all inscription. Bearing the death of its original context by anticipating its reaffirmation elsewhere, the sovereign's self-constituting "yes" means that he is always becoming different to himself. Because "his" signifier can always "get along without him"--and must do so in order to refer to him at all--he is continually lost on the way: an abandoned work. His continual reinscription of his limits engages the iterability through which signifiers function like the personal pronouns that annihilate the Unnamable--deictic shifters whose referents alter when they are re-used, and whose identity in any instance of utterance depends on the possibility of being repeated differently: "it's the fault of the pronouns. There is no name for me, no pronoun for me, all the trouble comes from that" (*Unnamable* 562). For this reason the Unnamable doubts each new iteration of self throughout the trilogy: "Where now? Who now? When now? [. . .] I, say I. Unbelieving" (401). The pronoun "I" is a radical instance of a sign whose recognizability depends on the possibility of its repetition "as the same" elsewhere (Derrida, "Meaning" 50). The "I" can be identified only if it is "capable of remaining the same for an I-here-now in general, keeping its sense even if my empirical presence is eliminated or radically modified"; it "has the status of speech only if it is intelligible in the absence of its object, [. . .] here, in the absence of myself." Derrida takes this theory to the Beckettian extreme by arguing that, because "I" is always a representation that fails to arrive--and because its communicative function as a recognizable and repeatable sign depends on the possibility of referring to the speaker in his or her absence--"my death is structurally necessary to the pronouncing of the I" ("Supplement" 95-96). As Peggy Kamuf explains, "the 'I' is already a repetition, more than one, always one plus the endless possibility of other ones" (121). It anticipates its own re-enactment elsewhere. Thus for Zarathustra as for the Unnamable, "I will return" in the mouth of another.

In this paradoxical assumption of communicability, the identity of a signifier is conceivable only through the risk of its disfigurement. Its sense of presence depends on its failure to achieve it, because to be conceived as distinct from its past and future configurations it must carry the trace of those others within it. As Derrida shows by recontextualizing his comments from "Signature Event Context" in *Mémoires*, iterability is a condition of impossible mourning in which a word is carried spatially and temporally away from itself, its identity haunted and constituted by its difference both from other words in the same context and from its anticipated meanings upon repetition in other contexts:

> everything depends upon contexts which are always open, non-saturable, because a single word (for example, a word in a title)[15] begins to bear the meaning of all the potential phrases in which it is to be inscribed [. . .] and because, inversely, no phrase has an absolutely determinable 'meaning': it is always in the situation of the word or title in relation to the text which borders it and which carries it away, in relation to the always open context which always promises it more meaning. (115-16)

For the signifier constituted by the risk of failing to keep to its context, meaning is mourning.

Derrida signals a shift from here to the context of Irish literature by grafting these ideas into "Ulysses Gramophone," the essay in which he reads Molly Bloom's final "yes I said yes I will yes" as an example of the repeated affirmation of the future-oriented self that is "always in the form of an answer," spoken in relation to an other, "even if this is the other in me" (34, 46). While referring to her husband's "being at the telephone" as a comic representation of being-toward-death in the "Aeolus" chapter, he also analyzes this "telephonic yes" (38) in the words of Professor McHugh, who, after a series of yeses to Bloom--"Hello. Evening Telegraph here. Hello? . . . Who's there? . . . Yes . . . Yes . . . Yes . . ."--informs the editor of Bloom's position (*Ulysses* 113). Heard also as "aye" and

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[15] In context, this remark refers to the title of a text by Austin, *The Meaning of a Word*. But it also exceeds its context to refer to the title of Derrida's text, *Mémoires*, where to write one's memoirs means both to remember oneself and to anticipate one's own death--to write "in memory of" oneself, which is the condition of all writing, as the Unnamable repeatedly finds through the logic of the supplement where to recall is to call from a distance.

"I,"[16] the same kind of "yes" helps Stephen to avoid his five-month-old debt of a pound to A.E. (George Russell). "Wait," Stephen thinks, "Five months. Molecules all change. I am other I now. Other I got pound." "I [. . .] am I by memory because under everchanging forms," he adds, and concludes by rephrasing the issue: "I, I. and I. I. AE IOU" (*Ulysses* 156). As in the case of Nietzsche who lives "on [his] own credit" (*Ecce* 217), the promissory contract (the affirmative OUI) is an IOU that both inscribes and effaces its original context. The self-sacrifice involved in self-affirmation through the divisive "oui" whose inscription supposes a "we" (Derrida, "Two" 150) might also explain the duplicity of the "word known to all men" in *Ulysses*. Stephen addresses his question--"What is that word known to all men?" (41)--first to a young woman and later to his mourned mother, who rises through the floor as Stephen "stops dead" after performing his "dance of death": "Tell me the word, mother, if you know now. The word known to all men" (473-74). Yet between these repeated requests he has already answered himself ambiguously by inserting a comma between two possible alternatives: "Do you know what you are talking about? Love, yes. Word known to all men" (161). The "yes" that opens the speaker to the other is hinged to the "love" that characterizes the ethics of such an opening, an ethics which, as I discuss in Chapter Five, always retains an unavoidable element of sacrifice.

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[16] "Ay, says I," says the narrator in Chapter 12 (Cyclops). Here the context offers a Nietzschean addition to Derrida's reading, for the narrator follows the first utterance of this remark with a reference to Joe Hynes' new job--a reference that recalls the sovereign's sending of himself to himself as a debt to be repaid in the future: "Ay, says I. How are the mighty fallen! Collector of bad and doubtful debts" (240).

Pained by what pleases Molly and Stephen, and seeming to side with the narrator of Beckett's "First Love" who decides that "what goes by the name of love is banishment, with now and then a postcard from the homeland" (*Collected* 31), the Unnamable complains after failed affirmations: "They should have schooled me to endure." But like the sovereign subject, he accepts (sometimes) that he cannot endure. Or rather, he accepts that the illusion of endurance is only made possible by enduring the pain of self-sacrifice on the rack of eternal return where his identity is stretched out and deferred over time: "the essential is never to arrive anywhere, never to be anywhere. [. . .] Nothing to do but stretch out comfortably on the rack, in the blissful knowledge you are nobody for all eternity" (469). Earlier, he has committed to the view that "the best [thing] is to think of myself as fixed and at the centre of this place [. . .]. In a word, [. . .] all change to be feared" (407). But he now realizes that he is a context perpetually created and killed by his self-affirmations. His words abandon him, "break[ing] with every given context, and engender[ing] infinitely new contexts in an absolutely nonsaturable fashion" with the result that "there are only contexts without any center of absolute anchoring" (Derrida, "Signature" 320). He concludes that he is "a caged beast born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born of caged beasts born in a cage and dead in a cage" (*Unnamable* 537), his phrasing itself insisting on the need for repeated reinscription of his cage.

Reinscription of the terms of the Good Friday Agreement has marked efforts to implement its promises since 1998. Political rhetoric has frequently resisted the openness of the Agreement's context even while recognizing a creative ambiguity in its terms. In March 2000, Bertie Ahern maintained that it was crucial to "work within the terms of the

Agreement," and Alliance Party leader Sean Neeson insisted that "[we should] stick to the Good Friday Agreement, [and] stop talking about moving outside of it, renegotiating it, or amending it" (qtd. in Geraldine Kennedy). McGuinness has accused unionists of trying to "rewrite, renegotiate and redraft the Agreement" (qtd. in *Irish Times*, 4 April 1999), an accusation that unionists have in turn redirected at his party. And Adams argued on 5 May 2000 that "there can be no dilution or departure from the Agreement" (qtd. in "SF Urge"). Yet while promoting the closure of that context, Adams has also moved toward opening it, adding on 14 March 2000 that "what we need is to broaden out the context of these discussions [. . .], [to] get away from the narrow axis of devolution and decommissioning" (qtd. in *Irish Times*, 15 March 2000). Trimble has also positioned himself on this hinge between sameness and change. The post-dated resignation letter that he signed and sent to his party chairman, promising to resign if the IRA had not begun decommissioning, literally mailed an enduring identity into the future for pickup. But it was arguably broken as soon as made, because of the reassurance he may have had that Mandelson would suspend the Assembly rather than obligate him to honour the commitment. In May 2001 he repeated this gesture by sending a post-dated resignation letter to the Assembly Speaker. This time he was obliged to act on his promise, and his resignation came into effect on 1 July 2001, while he was staying overnight in France to take part in commemorations for Irish troops killed at the Battle of the Somme. The combination of these events--his attendance at a commemoration service while also affirming the stability of a unionist who honours his promise--was more than coincidental. By remaining in France, Trimble played to his advantage the conceptual link between mourning and enduring identity. At the same time, however, he took this gamble in anticipation of being returned to the position from which had resigned; his goal, many argue, was to compel a gesture from the IRA on decommissioning which would solidify unionist support for his policies and lead to his re-election, both of which occurred in October-November 2001, though his re-election was secured only after the controversial redesignations of political identities that I analyze in Chapter Five. Again, the promise to resign was in effect broken in advance by the anticipation of further revisions beyond its enactment. By intending his resignation as a temporary state of affairs, he proved true to his word while simultaneously pointing to the provisionality of the position he had assumed. Destabilized by its own logic of loss and return, his action oscillated uneasily between two senses of endurance. It inhabited the contradiction suggested most simply by the questions raised in March 2000 about Trimble's commitment to unionist demands. After being accused of breaking his commitments, of having more than a cat's "nine lives" and doing "something different in each of them," as the UUP's Margaret Coulter put it (qtd. in Breen, "Trimble's"), Trimble responded--even while changing his position to one in which IRA "arms up front" might not after all be a precondition for restoring the North's political institutions--by saying, "I dislike intensely the suggestion that I'm going to do one thing this week and do something different the next, [. . .] that I could behave in such a dishonest manner" (qtd. in Millar, "UUP"). The paradox spoken here by Adams and Trimble, where the "dishonesty" of broken words inhabits any commitment, and where to endure is to endure self-sacrifice, allows for a positive response to those ambiguities and revisions that are often met instead with frustration. As Fintan O'Toole has pointed out, "what the Agreement says depends on who is reading it" ("Policing"). But this does not mean it is bound to permit simple intransigence or avoidance. The reiterability of its terms shows that the borders of such agreements may be continually displaced to the provisional advantage of unassimilated voices that both allow for and pre-empt the possibility of sealing them. These may be heard voices like those of anti-agreement republicans and unionists, or UDA and UVF loyalists who have said they were "kept out of the loop" during talks on the peace process (Moriarty, "McMichael"). Yet the same opportunity may also be available to others still unheard or only superficially recognized by the document. Such an argument affirms the need for what Derrida has called "an incessant, daily negotiation" (*Points* .. . . 95) between terms of containment and excess, agreeing with Beckett that limits can never finally "be said," but only "missaid" (*Worstward* 89).

As he recontextualized himself in Washington on Saint Patrick's Day 2000, Trimble's promise not to rely, as before, on ambiguous language, suggested that only strictly determinable commitments could establish a new context for resuming government without IRA decommissioning (qtd. in de Bréadún, "Ulster"). Yet in the weeks following that statement he continued to offer his own form of such language: calling for clarification of the IRA statement on weapons inspections while at the same time selling the ambiguity of its terms to unionists. Peter Mandelson joined him in promoting the deal: "For the first time there is a commitment to put weapons completely and verifiably beyond use, in a context which is realistic rather than simply aspirational" (qtd. in "Mandelson"). The possibility both resisted and suggested by his own language, however, is that context is always aspirational.

Chapter 3

The Totality of Relationships: Signs of the State

1. Statements

The broadest aspirational context toward which the Agreement aims is the "totality of relationships" among the people of the Republic and the United Kingdom. This phrase, which appears three times in the document, was introduced into the political process during the December 1980 Anglo-Irish summit between Charles Haughey and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. At this meeting, which took place during the first phase of republican hunger strikes at the Maze and Armagh Prisons, they agreed at their next meeting to give "special consideration to the totality of relationships within these islands" (Dublin Communiqué, 8 December 1980, qtd. in Coogan 505). The phrase was officially recited in the Downing Street Declaration, which promises to work toward an agreement "which will embrace the totality of relationships" in Ireland (409).

Recitations of the phrase emphasize that such a contextual embrace is threatened when received truths are submitted to the iterability that is for Derrida "the emergence of the mark" ("Signature" 317). While Derrida's phrase seems to meet with Foucault on "emergence," his definition of context also resembles Foucault's definition of discourse. Analyzing an example of Husserl's "aggramaticality," Derrida treats context as "a system of rules" for possible truths determined by a will to knowledge: "it is only in a context determined by a will to know, by an epistemic intention, by a conscious relation to the object as an object of knowledge within a horizon of truth--it is in this oriented contextual field that 'green is or' is unacceptable" ("Signature" 320). The meaningfulness of a statement is determined by whether or not it is "in the truth," recognizable within the rules of a particular discourse. The same applies to positions of subjectivity, which, as Foucault has shown, are produced and limited by the set of social knowledges they inhabit. If the sign carries the force of exceeding its context, the subject carries the same force by bearing the possibility of its reconfiguration as an object of knowledge within different contexts. By bearing the trace of other possible networks of meaning to which it is linked, the enunciation of subjectivity gestures toward its constructedness, its performativity, and its provisionality.

The political force of commitment and context is accentuated through such a link to Foucault. His version of Derrida's "daily negotiation" is a recognition of philosophy as "the thought of an inaccessible totality," "a task without end, [. . .] a task in process of continuous recommencement, given over to the forms and paradoxes of repetition" (*Archaeology* 236). In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* (1969), to which this statement is appended in the essay "A Discourse on Language," Foucault's theory of the statement both anticipates Derrida's work on context and iterability (1971) and allows for a closer reading of the connection between Derrida's theory and Foucault's reiterations of emergence in his 1971 essay on Nietzsche. The connection helps to show how the enabling paradox of endurance, which emerges from mourning, extends to other discourses on Irish borders both inside and outside the Agreement.

I have argued above that the borders of agreements are established in relation to what they exclude. In the *Archaeology*, Foucault points to a similarly constitutive space between inside and outside: "We are studying statements at the limit that separates them from what is not said, in the occurrence that allows them to emerge to the exclusion of all others" (*Archaeology* 119). As this description suggests, a "statement" may be what emerges in the interstice between "discursive formations" (*Archaeology* 115), in the "non-place" of "pure distance" where a dominant discourse and its revaluation confront each other "face-to-face" ("Nietzsche" 150).

But the "statement" is harder to define than this, because it functions as both the space and the enunciation, and so is both determined and non-determinable. In its determined material form--as a sentence, proposition, or speech act--a statement can only be recognized within the discursive "rules that govern its appearance" (*Archaeology* 30). Foucault aims to get behind these rules that "make sense" of it (86) in order to speak of the statement as something still undetermined: "a residual element," "raw material," "any series of signs, figures, marks, or traces" that will later be recognized, through rules of grammar and logic and analysis, as a speech act, a proposition, or a sentence (84). It is "that which enables such groups of signs to exist, and enables these forms to become manifest" (88), but is not a unified or definable form of its own. Rather, it is a "function of existence" for signs, a function "on the basis of which one may then decide, through analysis or intuition, whether or not they 'make sense,' [. . .] of what they are a sign, and what sort of act is carried out by their formulation" (86). A statement, then, is something always about to be understood by discursive formations, and to be reiterated to political advantage within them. Foucault defines discursive formations as groups of statements governed by "the general set of rules [that determine] the way in which they are institutionalized, received, used, re-used, combined together, the mode according to which they become objects of appropriation, instruments for desire or interest, elements for a strategy" (115). The paradox of the undetermined statement is that it remains unthinkable: while it is not-yet understood it is also, necessarily, not conceivable as something prior to understanding. It is both apart from discourse (before it) and a part of discourse (only conceivable within it). Foucault approaches this impossible concept from various directions. The statement is an "enunciative function"--"neither hidden nor visible" but existing "at the limit of language"--from which every "flash of meaning" emerges (112). It is an irruption, an incision, an event (28) that is "implied, but never made explicit, in all other analyses of language" (111). As the implied origin of language, it acquires the status of Heidegger's unthought gift of Being, the "is" that is implied behind all statements that "there is." It is not "what is given" in sentences or propositions, but rather "the very fact that they are given, and the way in which they are given. It has the quasi-invisibility of the 'there is', which is effaced in the very thing of which one can say: 'there is this or that thing'" (111). As this connection to the unthought gift behind being suggests, the statement also functions in a way similar to Derrida's "trace."[1]

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[1] "Language," writes Foucault, "always seems to be inhabited by the other, the elsewhere, the distant; it is hollowed by absence." So in order to describe the enunciative level of the statement we need to "question language, not in the direction to which it refers, but in the dimension that gives it; ignore its power to designate, to name, to show, to reveal, to be the place of meaning or truth, and, instead, turn one's attention to the moment--which is at once solidified, caught up in the play of the 'signifier' and the 'signified'--that determines its unique and limited existence" (111). Heidegger also turns his attention to the dimension that gives language, the moment that determines its existence, and finds "Being," the "there is / it gives" that "rules as the destiny of being" and extinguishes itself at the same time: "It gives and refuses itself

Foucault distances himself from the notion of the trace, however. He aims to avoid what he considers the misleading search for a "moment or the trace of [the statement's] origin," a "moment of foundation when speech was not yet caught up in any form of materiality, [. . .] when it was confined to the non-determined dimension of the opening" (*Archaeology*125). He maintains that he is not seeking an "interior secret that preceded [statements], [and] left its mark in them," that he is not concerned with "the problematic of a trace, which, prior to all speech, is the opening of inscription, the gap of deferred time" that amounts to a "historico-transcendental theme" (121).

Yet Derrida's treatment of the "opening of inscription" aims not to represent but to disable the possibility of interiority, priority, and origin. For Derrida, there is only the appearance of such meanings through the articulation of *différance*, the arche-writing that places the trace of the other before the same, the outside before the inside. (I use "before" here in the double sense of being both behind and ahead of presence, as the paradoxically future-oriented origin at which representation seeks to arrive). As that which marks the relation between life and its other, the trace disables interiority by insisting on the "subject's relationship with its own death" (*Grammatology* 69). As a "non-origin," it allows for the thought of an origin while simultaneously exposing that concept as an effect of representation: "The trace is not only the disappearance of origin, [. . .] it means

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simultaneously" ("Letter" 255). A self-effacing or self-withholding gift, it lies behind the ontological existence of discursively determined objects of knowledge but does not itself exist. In this context, it resembles Derrida's "trace" of the other that allows for a sense of self, and like the trace it operates in a "space" or "clearing" of difference that motivates meaning and allows for an entity to be determined as "being." (Derrida emphasizes the fact that the effacement is partial: something of the unthought trace always "remains" to haunt and divide being, or presence, from itself).

that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin" (*Grammatology* 61).

As Jeffrey Nealon explains, Foucault is critical of what he considers the "transcendental vocabulary" involved in formulating a notion like the trace, and of Derrida's engagement with Hegelian terms in the effort to reveal the unthought conditions of possibility behind such a potentially synthesizing dialectical discourse (113). Foucault aims instead to focus on discernible moments of disruption in order to maintain their materiality, which he suggests is overlooked through a theorization of their linguistic conditions of production through the trace. Thus he argues that "for statements it is not a condition of possibility but a law of coexistence" (*Archaeology* 116). He describes his approach instead as an analysis of statements in their "specific forms of accumulation" and "relations of exteriority" (125).

To follow the question of why an insistence on context and commitment coincides with mourning in the rhetoric of the peace process, however, I want to retain the notion of the trace--and particularly the trace as a marker of death--as a condition of possibility behind discursive formations. This chapter continues to analyze how political texts reconfigure terminologies that exceed their original authorizing contexts, and how they indicate the overlap between different treatments of revaluation. Describing this process of articulation, I focus on the simultaneously preservative and destructive force of those relations of difference upon which the statement's materiality depends. Inflected through the rhetoric of decommissioning and borders in Ireland, Foucault's treatment of revaluable contexts through relations of exteriority becomes compatible with Derrida's treatment of such contexts through the anticipatory relation to death and the opening to the other that is the condition of possibility for interiorization. By continuing to redirect Foucault's terms toward mourning, I aim not only to stress that linguistic thinking through the trace is inseparable from the material effects it produces and responds to, but also to accentuate how repetitions of mourning and promising operate in the construction of historical legacies and political allegiances.

A connection between the contexts of the statement and those of the iterable signifier can be drawn through Foucault's description of repeatability. An effect of its indeterminacy is that the statement is both fixed and repeatable. Exceeding its determination in any particular discourse, its identity is crucially inconsistent. It is always inscribed in relation to other possible "field[s] of use" (*Archaeology* 104) that carry it away from itself. The "identity of a statement," which oscillates according to the way it is used, is conditioned and limited by "all the other statements among which it figures" (103); "deriving support from and distinguishing itself from them," it is "always part of a network of statements" (99), both spatially and temporally. This means that it is "linked not only to the situations that provoke it, and to the consequences that it gives rise to, but at the same time, and in accordance with a quite different modality, to the statements that precede and follow it" (28). Always "an event that neither the language (*langue*) nor the meaning can quite exhaust," its materiality (its determination by "a substance, a support, a place, and a date" [101]) is "unique, yet subject to repetition, transformation, and reactivation" (28). The "repeatable materiality" of the statement is a condition in which it "cannot be repeated" identically (102).

Like the iterability of the sign, the statement's repeatable materiality exceeds any constraining context. "One cannot say a sentence," writes Foucault, "one cannot transform it into a statement, unless a collateral space is brought into operation. A statement always has borders peopled by other statements. These borders are not what is usually meant by 'context'--real or verbal--that is, all the situational or linguistic elements, taken together, that motivate a formulation and determine its meaning. They are distinct from such a 'context' precisely in so far as they make it possible" (97-98). The fixed borders of a statement, then, can be understood as the conditions of possibility and impossibility of such a "usual" meaning.

The way in which the statement exceeds its own context can also be described as its "exteriority," the irreducible relation to the outside that makes text and context inseparable. The exteriority of the statement means, for Foucault, that "there is no subtext" and that "the enunciative domain is identical with its own surface" (119). In a network of exteriorized statements, there is no place apart, no objective, privileged, or "protected" position from which a text can be described. This aspect of exteriority resembles Derrida's insistence that "there is nothing outside of the text [*il n'y a pas de hors-texte*]" (*Grammatology* 158), that "the outside is the inside" (*Grammatology* 30). The statement's situation "at the limit of language" (112) allows it to break with its context through repeatable materiality. Behind the materiality of those specific forms of accumulation that Foucault describes, there emerges a relation of difference that allows the statement to both enter and exceed its determinate form within the rules of a particular discourse. A statement's identity "exists" both inside and outside of materiality and determination.

The link between exteriority and the haunting relations of impossible mourning, where the borders of the interiorizing subject are always "peopled" by others, is accentuated in passages like the following from *Of Grammatology*, which Derrida offers in support of the claim that exteriority constitutes interiority: "The sickness of the outside [. . .] is in the heart of the living word, as its principle of effacement and its relationship to its own death" (313). "As always," he adds, "death, which is neither a present to come nor a present past, shapes the interior of speech, as its trace, its reserve, its interior and exterior différance: as its supplement" (315).[2]

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[2] Repeatable materiality and iterability have also been aligned by Nealon, who reads Foucault's description of context beside Derrida's statement that "no context permits saturation" due to "the structure of the remnant or of iteration" (Derrida, "Living" 81). He argues that for both theorists, text and context, interiority and exteriority, are unsustainable divisions, because both are made possible "in the same field, under the same conditions--for Foucault this field is the 'flat' network of statements, for Derrida it is the 'structure of the remnant or of iteration'" (104). His comparison aims to read Derrida and Foucault "together [. . .] at the point where they seem farthest apart" (103) by emphasizing the inseparability of textuality and historicity. Here he is in agreement with Robert Young, who counters suggestions that an opposition between "textuality" and "history" can be found in the work of Derrida and Foucault by noting that both analyze history as a discursive construct (71). The differences between these theorists have often been falsely described as an opposition between on the one hand a focus on history, power relations, materiality, and discursive institutions, and on the other a transcendentalizing textuality divorced from material conditions. Anticipating Nealon's criticism of readings of Foucault that maintain such a clear contextual division and so resist recognizing in Derrida's theory the kind of material historical and political importance attributed to Foucault, Young argues that "the so-called Derrida-Foucault debate [. . .] is often misrepresented, not least by Foucault himself, as a confrontation between 'textuality' and 'history.' But Foucault's own subsequent work shows that it could not really be a question of choice on these terms, for the simple reason that, as he himself is at pains to point out, [. . .] history is itself a discursive practice: while the latter cannot simply be equated with the textual, it cannot be crudely opposed to it either" (71).

Both Nealon and Young also note that an analysis of historicity and textuality does not, for either theorist, involve assuming a privileged place of objectivity and interiority that

In one of many descriptions that echo Derrida on the birth and death of context through the orphaned and iterable signifier, Foucault concludes that the statement is "too repeatable to be entirely identifiable with the spatio-temporal coordinates of its birth, [. . .] too bound up with what surrounds and supports it" (*Archaeology* 104-05). The creation of the Good Friday Agreement has frequently been described as a difficult birth. Coogan, for example, quotes Father Gerry Reynolds' view that the creation of the Agreement was "like a baby being born," that in spite of the traumatic beginnings of "blood and torn tissues, [. . .] both will heal, and the baby will grow." Coogan calls this a "wonderfully appropriate image." It is appropriate, if we think of the Agreement as a Nietzschean birth, an emergence between discursive formations, an affirmation and a promise. Coogan's qualification of Reynolds' remark--"the only problem was that many on the Unionist side regarded the baby as a bastard" because the DUP's Jeffrey Donaldson did not sign it (712)--may also be appropriate, in that it extends the Nietzschean connection both to Foucault and to Derrida, for whom the promissory writing that anticipates the death of its author is "an iterative structure cut off from all absolute responsibility, from consciousness as the authority of the last analysis, writing orphaned, and separated at birth from the assistance of its father" ("Signature" 316).

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somehow liberates itself from the unstable and provisional processes of discursive construction. As Foucault reminds us, any apparently interiorized separate place of analysis only appears to be separate. Analysis, he writes, "leaves the final placing of the text in dotted outline. But we must be clear on one point: if analysis stands back in relation to this final construction, it is not to turn away from the discourse and to appeal to the silent work of thought." There is no simple pre- or extra-discursive region to inhabit. "One is not seeking, therefore, to pass from text to thought, from talk to silence, from the exterior to the interior, from spatial dispersion to the pure recollection of the moment, from superficial multiplicity to profound unity. One remains within the dimension of discourse" (*Archaeology* 76-77).

Like the statement, the Agreement can be described as "one of those objects that men produce, manipulate, use, transform, exchange, combine, decompose and recompose, and possibly destroy." To this description of the statement, Foucault adds (in advance of Beckett's focus on the missaid), that "instead of being something said once and for all, the statement, as it emerges in its materiality, appears with a status, enters various networks and various fields of use, is subjected to transferences, modifications, is integrated into operations and strategies in which its identity is maintained or effaced." As it circulates in this way, both inhabiting and exceeding its own conditions of materiality, the Agreement also takes on certain qualities of the statement in that it "serves or resists various interests, participates in challenge and struggle, and becomes a theme of appropriation and rivalry" (*Archaeology* 105). Foucault's reading of revaluation as take-over, transformation, and redirection does not suppose that the will to power seizes an object that already exists independently of it. Rather, in a sense that again meets with Derrida's description of context, it seems to agree that revaluation is not a performance that comes second. There remains in this point of convergence, however, the possibility that deliberate gestures of reiteration by political figures may be motivated by the recognition that the destabilizing process of revaluation is already at work in a discourse whose power is divisively constituted through structures of resistance.

The embracing totality of relationships that promises, in the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, to incorporate and respect the people of Ireland and Britain "in all the diversity of their identities" through councils operating on a cross-border basis, is an embrace that crosses its own borders. Diversity cannot be contained within unity, as John

Hume has hoped. Instead, the concept of a totality of relationships is unsettled by the same source from which it seems to borrow in the "postmodern lexicon" of Irish political negotiations (Rolston 259). Foucault's "episteme" refers to "the total set of relations that unite, at a given period, the discursive practices that give rise to epistemological figures, sciences, and possibly formalized systems" (*Archaeology* 191). The borrowing is again indirect, and the wording does not suggest that the Agreement be treated as an identical reproduction of Foucault's episteme. The correlation does, however, prompt a closer focus on the key phrase "totality of relations" as it reappears in the peace process. The appropriation highlights the way in which a prevalent contradiction in Foucault's use of the phrase both renders it relevant to the affirmative failure of impossible mourning and anticipates an equally important contradiction in the terms of this political process. While the episteme is described as a totality, it also fails to be one. It hovers between qualities of unity and diversity, totality and infinity, regularity and irregularity. "The episteme is not," Foucault writes, "a form of knowledge (*connaissance*) or type of rationality which, crossing the boundaries of the most varied sciences, manifests the sovereign unity of a subject, a spirit, or a period." Rather, "the description of the episteme [. . .] opens up an inexhaustible field and can never be closed" (*Archaeology* 191-92). It is "not *a sort of grand underlying theory*, it is a space of *dispersion*, it is an *open field of relationships and no doubt indefinitely specifiable*." It is "a complex relationship of successive displacements," a "cluster of transformations" ("Politics" 10, 25, emph. Foucault's). Like any unsaturable context that engenders others, the episteme is "a constantly moving set of articulations, shifts, and coincidences that are established, only to give rise to others"

(*Archaeology* 192). Foucault's description of the episteme as a series of displacements might also be applied to the result of those excesses that both trouble interpretations of the Agreement as an unassailable totality and generate its continual reinscription.

2. Borders

Such a displacement of borders is not limited to recent agreements in Ireland. Lloyd points beyond those limits when, in *Anomalous States*, he bridges the contexts of Irish literature with Pearse and the nationalism of 1916. Building on his description of an Irish nation that requires recommemoration to legitimate its function as a representative of the people, he compares Yeats's writing to performative declarations of national sovereignty which are "perpetuated only in the recurrent act of self-creation" (79). In the analysis from *Ireland After History* outlined in my Introduction, he develops this discussion of repetition into an analysis of the performative ephemerality of foundational acts, including the Proclamation of the Republic. Expanding on the terms of affirmation and reiteration discussed above, I would add that obligatory reinscription is combined with affirmative self-sacrifice as the Proclamation acknowledges that it is asserting a sovereign yes for the seventh time (referring probably to the rebellions of 1601, 1640, 1798, 1803, 1848, and 1867):[3]

> In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty. Six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the

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[3] See *The Field Day Anthology* 3: 733.

> face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom. (206)

It concludes by suggesting that the nation will only prove true to its word and arrive at itself through the contradiction of self-discipline and sacrifice: "In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called" (207). That destiny has been continually deferred and reasserted since. Its promissory condition of anticipation is accentuated by the Good Friday Agreement's revision of Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. Where de Valera wrote in 1937 of the "right" to a united Ireland and implied immediate consistency in a territorial claim ("The national territory consists of the whole island of Ireland, its islands and the territorial seas"; "the unity of our country" is to be "restored" and "re-integrated" [154-55]), the Agreement substitutes a "will" toward unity rather than a recollective claim to what has been lost: "It is the firm will of the Irish nation, in harmony and friendship, to unite all the people who share the territory of the island of Ireland, in all the diversity of their identities and traditions" (174).

The anticipatory openness of Irish boundaries, enabled through what Bruton has called "constructive ambiguity," is also written into the promise to establish a Boundary Commission in Article 12 of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty--a promise described at the time as being "full of ambiguity, full of grave and dangerous ambiguity" (Lord Buckmaster, March 1922, qtd. in Harkness 44). This is an early narrative of deferral and self-effacing commitment that tested the limits of the boundary that is still being challenged. In what is often described as the lie that fooled Michael Collins and his Irish Delegation into signing the document, the Treaty anticipated a Boundary Commission that would "determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland." Collins believed this was a crucial part of rendering the Treaty "a step towards a Republic" (qtd. in Hennessey 34). By threatening to reduce first a half, then up to a third, of Northern Ireland's territory (including counties Fermanagh and Tyrone, parts of Armagh, and the cities of Derry and Newry), it would make Northern Ireland untenable and oblige its Prime Minister, James Craig, to join forces with the South even in the absence of an immediate agreement on unity; reduced "to such limits [that] it cannot exist without us, [. . .] it would be forced in" (Collins, qtd. Hennessey 25). But while Collins was focusing on "the wishes of the inhabitants," the clause's inclusion of "economic and geographic" criteria undermined his aim. The Commission was deferred until after the civil war, and convened first in 1924. Its 1925 report, which was suppressed and not finally published until 1969, offered small transfers of territory to both sides, but did not transfer Fermanagh, Tyrone, or Derry. Its chairman, Justice Feetham, was determined to sustain rather than minimize the division of Ireland: "Northern Ireland must, when the boundaries have been determined, still be recognisable as the same provincial entity; the changes made must not be so drastic as to destroy its identity" (qtd. in Harkness 44). When this story was leaked, and the Free State's committee member resigned in protest, an agreement designed "to amend and supplement" the 1921 Treaty--the Ireland (Confirmation of Agreement) Act of 1925--was drawn up. This supplement revoked all of Article 12 and left the six county boundary just as it was (as defined by the 1920 Government of Ireland Act). While defending this new agreement, W. T. Cosgrave, leader of the Free State government, argued for a spirit of cooperation and urged Northern nationalists to "assist in this development by becoming a connecting link instead of a wall of partition between Dublin and Belfast" (qtd. in Hennessey 40). As an inscription of limits, the border was both of these things.

Borders were similarly articulated by the 1948 Republic of Ireland Act and the 1949 Ireland Act, both of which dealt with relations between the Republic and England. After the "abdication crisis" of 1936, de Valera implemented the policy of "external association" that had been denied Sinn Fein in the 1921 Treaty.[4] In 1921 the Free State had been obliged to accept Dominion status within the Commonwealth, coupled with an oath of allegiance to the crown which gave them "the status of British subjects" (Hennessey 21). External association amended this situation; the King was deprived of his function in the Free State's internal affairs but retained his role in its external affairs, including diplomatic appointments and international agreements. Ireland, then, had special status within yet was also outside of the Commonwealth. With the 1948 Republic of Ireland Act, John A. Costello's new government completed the break by withdrawing from the Commonwealth and making Ireland formally a Republic. The British government's response to this move in its own 1949 Ireland Act surprised Costello (who had seen his break as a step toward unity) by instituting its "constitutional guarantee" that the North would not cease to be a part of the UK except by consent. It ironically re-entrenched a separation within Ireland in response to Ireland's separation from Britain.[5] Costello's repeal of the External Relations Act, however, did not amount to complete separation from Britain. With two key performatives, the new Ireland Act both drew and erased the line between the Republic and Britain. Article 1 declared "that the part of Ireland heretofore known as Eire [has] ceased [. . .] to be part of His Majesty's Dominions" (160). Article 2 reappraised the border: "It is hereby declared that, notwithstanding that the Republic of Ireland is not part of His Majesty's dominions, the Republic of Ireland is not a foreign country for the purposes of any law in force in any part of the United Kingdom" (161); this meant that former trading and citizenship privileges were retained. As David Harkness puts it, quoting the French Ambassador to the UK at the time, "while [the Dominion] had before agreed 'to be excluded inside the Commonwealth' it was now 'included outside the Commonwealth'" (80).

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[4] This was the same year in which he declared the IRA illegal, thus distancing himself for the second time from the organization (having left Sinn Féin to establish Fianna Fáil in 1926).

The dynamic anticipates Ireland's place as a part of the EU in recent debates. Both Sile de Valera (Eamon de Valera's granddaughter, and Fianna Fáil's Minister for Arts, Heritage, Gaeltacht and the Islands) and Tánaiste Mary Harney have promoted "enlargement" of the EU while opposing "excessive integration" and centralization. On 18 September 2000, de Valera argued that EU regulations often "impinge on our identity, culture, and traditions" and do not "respect the complexities and sensitivities of member states." "As we embraced Europe," she added, "we seemed at times to forget our close and very important ties with the United States" (de Valera). Writing in the *Irish Times* on 20 September 2000, Harney also argued that Ireland was "spiritually closer to Boston than Berlin." Supporting Ireland's desire to avoid a harmonization of EU tax rates (corporate tax breaks having in large part nourished the Celtic Tiger economy), she considered Ireland more in tune with American liberalism than European leftism. Admitting that the EU "allowed us to define ourselves in the world in a way that went beyond our relationship with the neighbouring island," she added that because "democracy is all about difference," she wanted not "a United States of Europe" but "a Union of independent sovereign states" (Harney). EU President, Romano Prodi, responded patronizingly to this resistance during a December 2000 EU summit. EU membership and its ensuing economic boom is "the greatest event in your history," he told the Irish. "Outside Europe, you have nothing. What would you be outside Europe? [. . .] But you are not grateful for that. [. . .] You don't acknowledge that this fantastic change has come about because of Europe. And you didn't lose your sovereignty. You are Irish. Terribly Irish" (qtd. in Smyth and Staunton). Sovereignty is in dependence.

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[5] As the editors of *The Field Day Anthology* describe it, "The Republic was given constitutional embodiment but at the price of deepening the partition to which all theories of the republic had previously objected or denied legitimacy" (3: 762).

This nationalistic *fort-da* is extended by the fact that the EU is often seen as a way toward political and economic unity for the entire island. McGarry and O'Leary explain that "the disproportional representation of small states in EC and EU institutions means that the north as a relatively large part of Ireland would fare much better in its political capacities than it can as a small and insignificant part of the United Kingdom." One possible implication of this, as John Hume has also argued, is that "increased peripheralization will force both parts of Ireland [. . .] to co-operate for reasons of economic self-interest" (McGarry and O'Leary 280). The Single Market Economy, James Anderson adds, "constitutes the most important new dynamic behind North-South integration" (134-35).

The dangers of expanding such links further through the new political organizations more recently proposed as part of European enlargement have been debated before and since Ireland's 7 June 2001 referendum on the Nice Treaty. The vote turned against it, influenced by opponents, including Sinn Féin, who argued not against the notion of enlargement itself (the addition of up to twelve new member-states) but against the new centralized power structures that threatened to weaken Ireland's political voice and economic power in the EU. They pointed out that the treaty seeks to shift the balance of power between states through a policy of "enhanced cooperation" which would place more decision-making and vetoing power in the hands of a small number of richer and more populous states, marginalizing the national and regional voices of smaller states and creating a federalized European superstate or "united states of Europe." Opponents have also argued against the globalization of trade markets and the creation of a "two-tier Europe" involved in this kind of expansion. They have pointed out that the form of enlargement envisioned by the Nice Treaty was designed to strengthen multinational corporate interests by opening the markets of new member states to exploitative trade practises, while also promoting the deregulation and privatization of public services in both new and existing states. At the time of writing, on the anniversary of the the first referendum, Bertie Ahern, under pressure from other European states who want to put the treaty into effect by the end of 2002, has renewed his pledge and reiterated his determination to hold a second referendum, hoping to sway public opinion by including a declaration of continued Irish neutrality to counter the other main concern about the treaty: its perceived aim toward increased European militarization through adjustment of the control structure of the pan-European security force (the European Rapid Reaction Force).

Richard Kearney's vision of Ireland's place in a European context expands on the "totality of relationships" envisioned by recent agreements and indirectly emphasizes the possibility of displacement. Yet it does so only to locate the embrace at a further remove. Kearney promotes, with Hume, a "Europe of Regions" which would amount to "an association allowing every one of its members to express multiple identities expanding outward in concentric circles--individual (as person), regional (as resident), national (as heritor), constitutional (as citizen), federal (as member [of the EU])." Such an association would allow for regional diversity within European unity: "Europe must allow for multiple layers of compatible identification--regional, national, and federal--fostering, in turn, a fuller way of being." He admits that the model is difficult to sustain, that if these "identity-needs" are not met, what may result is "a displaced nationalism at a supranational level." "The danger for a federal Europe, in [this] instance," he adds, "would be the upsurge of a new Eurocentrism." But in spite of his resistance to centrism, his return to terms of supersession and sublation arguably reinscribes the totalization he seeks to avoid: "The difficulty facing the postnationalist paradigm is how to surmount--or, to use Hegel's term, sublate--the arrested dynamics of nationalism while still commanding the allegiance of citizens" (*Postnationalist* 185). Kearney argues that the inclusive concept of a "'Britannic melting pot'" (179) promises a variety of heterogeneous cultural and linguistic links between the people of Ireland and the UK, and he challenges established contexts by offering an "extension of identity reference [that] allows an abandonment of the obsession with national self-sufficiency" (179) and the "exclusivist-centralist paradigm" of a nation's homogenous insistence on either elimination or absorption of minorities (184).

This leads him to an alternate model of self-sufficiency. He argues that the emergent nationalisms in Europe at the turn of this century were, and continue to be, regressive formations. They are "the efforts of those who refuse to accept, or to mourn, the inevitable passing of the nation-state--real or imaginary." "Thus defined," he explains, "regressive nationalism is often 'depressive' nationalism. [. . .] Such nationalism represents a collective variation on Nietzsche's *ressentiment*. It arises when the normal stage of cultural-political growth is blocked, forcing identitarian energies inwards to a separatist-narcissistic extreme which often results in terrorism, war, scapegoating or 'ethnic cleansing'" (184). The implication seems to be that the mourning of the nation state can be either refused, or completed and normalized. Even as his distinction appears to resist it, however, I would argue that the notion of impossible mourning more accurately describes Kearney's project. His view, developed from Charles Taylor, that "identity-acknowledgement" always has a "normal" and "originally valid" form in "legitimate nationalism" (184), leads him to paradigms of fullness which in turn he resists by arguing that such "identitarian energies" ought to be turned outward.

Yet his alternative to the inward turn of *ressentiment* falls short of recognizing that the new sovereign's affirmation delegitimates normative and original identity. His recommendation for conceptual renewal inevitably contains elements of the more conventional concepts of presence and inclusivity; it is conceptually inseparable from the "danger" of "centrism" around which circles extend concentrically rather than displacing one another's centres through a series of emergences at the limit. As I mentioned in Chapter One, his turn to sublation works against, but perhaps also produces, his simultaneous promotion of his project as an affirmative one of continued political negotiation that resists "totalizing notions of identity" (62).

Lloyd criticizes this kind of contradictory approach in what he describes as the "EC policy of regionalism" espoused by John Hume, one that "has the absurd goal of preserving cultural difference within the broader plan for rationalizing and homogenizing the European political economy." This policy, he adds, is "a merely aesthetic response to the contradictions of modernization and cultural difference" (*Ireland* 81). In place of homogenization, Lloyd recognizes that alternative formations both produce and are produced by dominant structurings of identity. The pedagogical narrative of progress and modernity, for example, dismisses "irrational" alternatives as atavistic or dead while at the same time creating and "depend[ing] on them for its own articulation" (1). By focusing on what "emerges at the interface" (46) between forces of rationality and irrationality--particularly between normative violence and the disseminative violence it produces in order to appear to put down (120)--he analyzes "specific cultural forms" that emerge and persist as both constitutive and in excess of the state. With this formulation, Lloyd opposes transcendent approaches to European identity and implicitly counters promotions of the full work of mourning as a normative goal of identity politics. Following Walter Benjamin, he argues that alternative formations do not seek to "capture the state" (25) in a teleological triumph. Rather, they remain as radically discontinuous "constitutive antagonists" to its historical narrative (26), disrupting it with their refusal to pass away: "Benjamin's materialism demands always the contemporaneity of the dead, the subterranean persistence of social forms that make no sense, for the sake of their recalcitrance to the morbid logic of identity" (27).

In an essay published the following year, "Colonial Trauma / Postcolonial Recovery?," Lloyd makes this criticism of mourning as a normative goal explicit. Here he describes the insistence on a complete work of mourning in the language of both colonialism and nationalism. The "injunction to mourn as a means to decolonization" (218), he writes, is a common recuperative ideal of state-oriented and anticolonial nationalism, which draws between decolonization and curative therapeutic recovery an analogy that naturalizes the correspondence between individual psychology and social formations (215-16). Promoting a collective mourning that will overcome supposedly harmful and politically divisive fixations on the past, and implying that the Irish ought to leave the dead behind, "shake off the burden of the past and enter modernity as fully formed subjects" (221), this injunction reproduces the narratives and attitudes of the colonizer, whose rationalizing and assimilating history of capitalist development (recently intensified by the pressure of the European model of multinational capitalism) also counsels an abandonment of fixations on the past on the way toward modernization. The assimilating colonial narrative "legitimates colonial coercion" (218) in the name of progress, denying the possibility of the colonized culture's autonomous development and working on the universalizing assumption that "every element of the colonized culture that cannot be translated and assimilated to the development of colonial capitalist modernity must either be erased or encoded as a symptom of underdevelopment" or a paralyzed obsession with the past (219).

In contrast to the tendency to relegate pre-colonial and pre-capitalist elements of the colonized culture to "a backwardness that is symptomatic of a refusal to be cured," Lloyd aims to recognize "melancholy survivals," or "complex forms of *living on*" rather than recovering (219). Interpreting a second-generation oral account of a post-Famine eviction collected by the Irish Folklore Commission, he describes the notion of a key (which is demanded by British soldiers but does not exist in an Irish tenants' house that is never locked) as a symbol of the colonial state's disciplinary desire to impose a logic of progress and property upon the Irish. A previously unused iron door bar thrown angrily across the path of the soldiers in place of the absent key is transformed from its function as a superfluous object to one of resistance, and comes to signify "the persistence of an ethos that escapes the logic of property and economic reason" (228). Lying symbolically "athwart modernity" (219), it offers an image for the continuing life of a non-modern social formation. More importantly, he suggests, the confrontation between tenants and soldiers, which inspires recalcitrance and necessitates a strategic regrouping of homeless colonized subjects, may create the conditions for reconstituted forms of community and alternative strategies for facing and refusing the violence of a colonial regime (227). The post-Famine narrative provides an example of how the modernizing and recuperative obligation to achieve a work of mourning can be resisted.

While offering connections to a theory of impossible mourning through the contemporaneity of the unassimilable dead and the living on of non-modernized forms that resist efforts to understand public commemoration as a means of "letting the dead slip away without the trace of a wake behind them" ("Colonial" 221), Lloyd's ideas can also be compared to Derrida's view of "nonsaturable" contexts and Foucault's treatment of subject-formation in discourse. "The desire of nationalism," he writes, "is to saturate the field of subject formation so that, for every individual, the idea of nationality [. . .] becomes the central organizing term in relation to which other possible modes of subjectification--class or gender, to cite only the most evident instances--are differentiated and subordinated" (*Ireland* 27). Performative reiterations of alternative cultural logics resist such a "saturation": "Their recurrence, or 'iteration,' each time anew, introduces a deviation into the time-line of the state: the swerve that results from the invocation of the apparently past in a new place displaces historical determination and makes way for alternative cultural logics." Reconsidering a relationship between terms offered by Raymond Williams, he adds that "the 'residual,' made invisible except as atavism and myth to official discourse, recurs as the *emergent* form of newly antagonistic practices. This rhythm of return is that of the survival of alternative social imaginations amid the ruins of shattered cultures and the traces of state violence" (78, emph. Lloyd's). Thus the state continually produces forms that escape it. What Lloyd calls "the superordination of the state form" (28) that denies its articulated and displaced identity amounts to the kind of "sanctioned" or "legitimate" violence (Benjamin, "Critique" 279) recognized by the IRA in their effort to turn the decommissioning requirement back on the British, and so to have republican violence viewed not as a "barbaric" disruption of a peaceful modern state but as a contemporary response to the equally violent but now normalized force of British occupation.[6]

The project of alternative histories, Lloyd argues, is to "open spaces within which unsubordinated narratives can resonate." "That resonance," he adds, "is the effect of the excess of possible histories, subject positions, affects, affiliations or memories over the singular history through which the state seeks to incorporate and regulate its political subjects" (84). In the excessive context of the Good Friday Agreement which writes its alternatives into itself, sites of opposition between discursive formations may themselves perform the kind of task he describes. As a "progressive" formation, the Agreement both contains and is constituted in opposition to sectarian narratives of republicanism and loyalism, both of which are frequently accused of being backward and intransigent, of looking to the past rather than the future. Continual reiterations of commitment and context prevent either of these narratives, including the narrative of what is often considered the Agreement in its entirety, from becoming dominant and sustainable against change.

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[6] Lloyd's own examples stress the relevance of his readings to "terrorist" violence. He argues that both modern and "non-modern" forms emerge at the interface between state and paramilitary force in the North. New modes of counter-insurgency surveillance are resisted by new (or reactivated) "impenetrable forms of cultural intimacy." Such communites of locally specific knowledge fuse domestic and civil space with terrorist activity and so trouble the state's self-legitimating binary of a community in need of protection from violence (63). Moreover, as constitutive antagonists, these forms of intimate communal knowledge are in turn simulated by the state's surveillance techniques (48). He sees a similar dynamic of emergence in tactics of resistance such as dirty protests, hunger strikes, and political murals (49).

Looking beyond these political affiliations, Lloyd argues that alternative social and labour movements that have been sustained "by a common rejection of the state" are unlikely to find any such space in this Agreement, which promotes "a peace that is to be regulated everywhere by state institutions" and integrates Ireland into the progressive "economic regionalism of Europe, for which cultural difference is merely a commodifiable ornament laid over the homogenizing processes of capitalist rationalization" (107). Furthermore, by not questioning the legitimacy of either the British or Irish states and their "maintenance of power through an arbitrary monopoly on the use of repressive force," the Agreement continues to disavow "the colonial constitution of contemporary Ireland." It is thus bound toward "probable failure" (106). Read through Nietzsche and Derrida, this may be treated as a "necessary failure" in the writing itself. As such, the continued negotiation that failure compels may offer the opportunity for alternative voices to trouble the Agreement's borders, and may contribute to what Lloyd calls the "transformation" rather than the unification of Ireland through a strategic political rethinking that draws on "alternative social practices in Ireland as well as the dehierarchization of traditional assumptions and practices" (108).

Others have anticipated Lloyd's concerns. For Desmond Bell, the recent peace process emphasizes "'accepting difference' as a sociological given, rather than [constituting] difference in and through political struggle" (245). It promotes a multiculturalism that essentializes cultural identities rather than acknowledging, with

Bhabha, that "social differences [. . .] are the signs of the emergence of community envisaged as a project--at once a vision and a construction--that takes you 'beyond' yourself in order to return, in a spirit of revision and reconstruction, to the political *conditions* of the present" (*Location* 3, emph. Bhabha's). Finally, its politically correct rhetoric of parity equalizes the non-equatable traditions of unionism and republicanism and by doing so tends to ossify their positions. Bill Rolston describes this as a "two traditions" thesis that supposes between them a "faultless symmetry which ignores the power structures which emerged historically in Ireland and are in existence currently" (254). Supporting Bell, he criticizes the language of tolerance, diversity, and reconciliation for supporting a multiculturalism that aims to establish an unsustainable division by "prioritiz[ing] culture [and ethnicity] over economics and power" (259). Such prioritization depoliticizes history and nationalism and, as Lloyd agrees, avoids acknowledging the colonial structure of Ireland. For Rolston, the "grand sentiments of the Downing Street Declaration" (which are repeated in the Good Friday Agreement) mask difference in the name of diversity; they emphasize a "parity of esteem" (270) through which the state seeks to regulate and balance the expression and education of opposing groups and thus to "incorporate" them into a single nation-state (273). Multiculturalism becomes an assimilative, universalizing and progressive project that masks inequality.

But if the peace process "sanitiz[es] history under a narrative of reconciliation" and equal representation (Bell 243), then the lack of conciliation shown recently through disseminative reiterations of commitment and context can be seen as an affirmative resistance to such sanitization. On the one hand, the recent focus on decommissioning as the issue that makes or breaks the Agreement seems to overshadow other social concerns. Yet on the other, the unsustainability of limits revealed through the rhetoric of decommissioning necessarily does not end with that issue. Rather, it invites a reiterative articulation of other promises in the terms of the peace process. The Agreement, for example, promises "Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity" on "Human Rights" as well as "Economic, Social and Cultural Issues." To this end, it affirms, among other sweeping generalizations, "the right to equal opportunity in all social and economic activity, regardless of class, creed, disability, gender or ethnicity" (187). It aims to implement a cross-border "Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission" and, repeating its own terms, to create a statutory obligation "to promote equality of opportunity in relation to religion and political opinion; gender; race; disability; age; marital status; dependents; and sexual orientation" (187). It will establish an "Equality Commission," promote the work of the Northern Ireland Victims Commission, promote "social inclusion," "the advancement of women in public life," "tackl[e] the problems of a divided society and social cohesion in urban, rural and border areas" (190), and implement anti-discrimination legislation as well as measures on employment equality. In addition, it will encourage "linguistic diversity" and ensure that "symbols and emblems for public purposes" will be "used in a manner which promotes mutual respect rather than division" (190). The sheer variety of social formations and interests addressed in this catalogue of commitments--all cast in terms of reconciliation, equality, and unification--arguably makes it inevitable that those commitments will be transformed in the "challenge and struggle" of rearticulation. If so, the Agreement's gesture of incorporation may continue to be destabilized by the irreducible difference of its terms, its "totality of relations" becoming a relationship of competing and overlapping identities.

This possibility is emphasized by critics like Anderson, who see the Agreement as a chance for political mobilization around a variety of "non-nationalist and non-unionist politics based on social class, gender and other concerns which straddle the border and national divisions" (143). By bridging the border, he argues, new North-South institutions may exceed territorialism and help to dispel the belief "that there are just two options, an independent all-Ireland republic or a purely British Northern Ireland, when in reality these are no more than mutually unattainable 'bargaining positions'" (144). "Rather than seeing North-South integration as a state-centred 'national takeover' in either direction, or as the harmonious convergence of two civil societies into a unified island region of the EU," he suggests that "island-wide integration is better conceived as involving multi-dimensional conflicts within and between civil society and states North and South" (145). The "cross-border bodies" upon which the unity of the Agreement is based may, in other words, also carry it away from itself.

3. *The State*

This mutually constitutive dynamic of simultaneous exile and return returns us to Nietzsche, for whom both identity and state politics hang on the contextual hinge I have pointed to in the language of Kearney, Hume, and the Agreement. In his own model of an identity contextualized by "concentric circles" (Kearney, *Postnationalist* 185), Zarathustra affirms, "I form circles and holy boundaries around myself." This model, however, introduces his celebration of the "highest" type of soul, the soul which, by fleeing from and retrieving itself, opposes such containment (226). A similar contradiction appears later in the same chapter. Zarathustra announces that he is "the advocate of life, the advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle," and goes on to ask, "how could there be an outside-of-me? There is no outside!" When re-read "in context," however, this passage counters its own suggestion of separation and identity as it refers to words and music as bridges that articulate the soul's borders in a future-oriented relationship with "every other."

> How sweet it is, that words and sounds of music exist: are words and music not rainbows and seeming bridges between things eternally separated?
>
> Every soul is a world of its own; for every soul every other soul is an afterworld.
>
> Appearance lies most beautifully among the most alike; for the smallest gap is the most difficult to bridge.
>
> For me--how could there be an outside-of-me? There is no outside! But we forget that, when we hear music; how sweet it is, that we forget! (234)

Later in the same passage, Zarathustra's animals again invoke the internal contradiction of eternal return that renders existence a project of continually reaffirmed existence "in the middle" (or the interstice) between here and there: "O Zarathustra [. . .]. Existence begins in every instant; the ball There rolls around every Here. The middle is everywhere. The path of eternity is crooked" (234). As his "holy boundaries" are punctured, his personal borders become a contextual abyss:

> I, Zarathustra, advocate of life, advocate of suffering, the advocate of the circle--I call you, my most abysmal thought! Ah! You are coming--I hear you! My abyss speaks, I have turned my ultimate depth into the light! (233)

His "abysmal thought" is described earlier in *Zarathustra* as the image of a gateway between past and future. As I suggest in the following chapter, this gateway indicates to him that one can only affirm the eternal return from a moment of non-presence deprived of historical authority and foundation. Such an abyss is for Derrida "the ultimate justification" of his own proposition that "there is nothing outside the text": "Representation in the abyss of presence is not an accident of presence; the desire of presence is, on the contrary, born from the abyss (the indefinite multiplication) of representation" (*Grammatology* 163).[7] Prefiguring Derrida in a characterization that applies to them both, Nietzsche expands on the abyss, or the necessary failure of representation, in his "hermit's" theory of the philosopher and his mask: "[the hermit] will doubt whether a philosopher could *possibly* have 'ultimate and real' opinions, whether behind every one of his caves there is not, must not be, another deeper cave--a more comprehensive, stranger, richer world beyond the surface, an abysmally deep ground behind every ground, under every attempt to furnish 'grounds'" (*Beyond* 289, emph. Nietzsche's).

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[7] Derrida also expands on this proposition through a description of the constitutive excess of writing: "there has never been anything but writing; there have never been anything but supplements, substitutive significations which could only come forth in a chain of differential references," because "what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence" (*Grammatology* 159).

Nietzsche also pulls the ground out from under the state. When it denies its status as a performative identity effect (a status he invokes by rewriting the claim to absolutely representative sovereignty as "l'effet c'est moi" [*Beyond* 19]), the state is "the death of peoples." It exists by "devouring" the citizens whom its self-declaration paradoxically both constitutes and claims to be speaking for: "The state is the coldest of all cold monsters. Coldly it lies, too; and this lie creeps from its mouth: 'I, the state, am the people.' It is a lie! It was creators who created peoples and hung a faith and a love over them. Thus they served life" (*Thus* 75). In "Declarations of Independence," Derrida analyzes this kind of performative utterance that asserts its authority, or legitimates itself, only through reference to the very state and citizens-of-the-state that it speaks into being. As Lloyd has noted, the signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic reperform the problematic that Derrida reads into the American Declaration of Independence when they produce the effect of such pre-existent referents to legitimate their claim to representative status (*Anomalous* 85 fn; *Ireland* 110-11 fn). The phrasing of the Proclamation accentuates this creatively self-legitimating performativity: "We hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State. [. . .] The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman" (206-07). As Brannigan has observed, the same condition applies to de Valera's 1937 Constitution, whose opening paragraph states, "We, the people of Eire, [. . .] Do hereby adopt, enact, and give to ourselves this Constitution" (154). "The [Irish] constitution," he explains, "in which the aspiring 'we' is realised, is the gift of a 'we' that has not yet been established to an 'ourselves' that likewise awaits its own legitimation" (69).

Yet if Nietzsche's state "lives" by devouring its citizens, it also appears to die in the process, escaping the critique he directs at it. The state establishes its presence through a mournful incorporation of the effects (citizens) that its utterance postulates as foundational origins. The same act is also described in *Zarathustra*, however, as something close to compulsive repetition or the death drive that undermines any such presence by always letting a remainder escape its incorporative gesture. The state--which both invents and destroys itself through an act of creation that carries the same force as the revaluation of good and evil--finds that its origin is indigestible, superfluous, too much to retrieve:

> I offer you this sign: every people speaks its own language of good and evil [. . .]. It invented this language for itself in custom and law.
>
> But the state lies in all languages of good and evil; and whatever it says, it lies--and whatever it has, it has stolen.
>
> Everything about it is false; it bites with stolen teeth. Even its belly is false.
>
> Confusion of the language of good and evil; I offer you this sign as the sign of the state. Truly, this sign indicates the will to death! Truly, it beckons to the preachers of death!
>
> Many too many are born: the state was invented for the superfluous!

> Just see how it lures them, the many-too-many! How it devours them, and chews them, and re-chews them! (76)

As I suggested at the beginning of this chapter, both Foucault's and Derrida's theories of repeatability allow also for the possibility that subjects may remain both within and in excess of the state. Derrida shows that the identity of the subject is an effect of discourse, a situation made possible within it. Foucault, too, treats the knowable subject as something constituted as an effect of discursive practises that "systematically form the objects of which they speak" (*Archaeology* 49)--practises "in which the dispersion of the subject and his discontinuity with himself may be determined" (55). "The individual," then, "is not a pre-given entity which is seized on by the exercise of power. The individual, with his identity and characteristics, is the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies" (*Power* 49-50).[8] Foucault suggests that the point beyond such assertions is to recognize the discontinuity of discursive events, to seek sites of confrontation, transformation, and emergence between them, to analyze "those caesurae breaking the instant and dispersing the subject in a multiplicity of possible positions and functions" (*Archaeology* 231).

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[8] As Robert Young points out, "this does not of course mean that individuals as such did not exist before, but simply that they had not been constituted as objects of knowledge for political analysis" (197). In an interview with Richard Kearney collected in Kearney's *Dialogues with Contemporary Continental Thinkers*, Derrida offers a similar explanation of his project as one that does not eliminate the existence of the subject, but rather resituates it as an effect of language: "To deconstruct the subject does not mean to deny its existence. There are subjects, operations, or effects of subjectivity. This is an incontrovertible fact. To acknowledge this does not mean, however, that the subject is what it says it is. The subject is not some meta-linguistic presence; it is always inscribed within language. My work does not, therefore, destroy the subject; it simply tries to resituate it" (qtd. in Grosz, "Ontology" 99).

If Irish identity is in part an effect of the language of political agreements that determine such positions and functions, then reiterations of that language draw attention to sites of emergence and possible dispersion. They emphasize the aspirational condition of a text that both resists and insists upon fixity. This view of agreement prompts a reconsideration not only of identity but of the contexts of history, the indigestible object of the following chapter.

Chapter 4

Hunger for History

1. Borderline Cases

In his Introduction to "Unforgotten Sacrifice," the 1999 Twinbrook and Poleglass Commemoration Committee pamphlet mentioned in my own Introduction, Martin McGuinness drew attention to what has since been emphasized again on the twentieth anniversary of the 1981 hunger strikes: the fact that we are never quite finished with the dead. "There is much yet to be written about the hunger strike," he writes, and much "yet to be recorded" about republican sacrifice:

> But in time when it is right to do so we will write the history of this struggle and detail the part played by those who died and those who lived. We will try to bring to life on the printed page for those keen to know the type of people we are honouring here tonight. We will make sense of the characteristics and traits of those who served the struggle and died while doing so. This pamphlet will make a contribution to this overall history. (2-4)

When his writing anticipates more being written, however, it points to the way in which repeated commemorations approach but fall short of an overall history. The total account is always outstanding. This implication is repeated in similar pamphlets published by groups like the Beechmount Commemoration Committee and the Strabane National Graves Association. The writers of "Green River: In Honour of our Dead" begin by noting that "in a work of this nature there are bound to be omissions" and "unwitting oversights" (Beechmount 4); writers of "West Tyrone Remembers" admit that "due to the length of time lapsed since some of those who have died, [. . .] it is inevitable that information pertaining to those profiled would be lost," while assuring their readers that "any omission is totally unintentional" (Strabane, n.p.). The writers of the 1997 *Cost of the Troubles Study*, published by the Initiative on Conflict Resolution and Ethnicity (INCORE), concur on the inevitably incomplete status of such a project: "The work of counting the costs of violence in a society whilst violence has continued has been a heart-breaking one, and can seem like an endless--and perhaps pointless--task" (67). David McKittrick, too, in his introduction to *Lost Lives*, explains that while this nearly 1500-page annotated list of the 3638 people who died in troubles-related incidents between June 1966 and January 2000 aims for "a rounded picture of the circumstances of each death" in the conflict (13), it necessarily settles for rules of inclusion and exclusion. Limiting their list to deaths that were "a direct result of the troubles," the editors were obliged not only to determine the criteria of cause and effect, as McKittrick acknowledges, but also to define the limits of violence in order to isolate periods during which "no violence" was occurring:

> We agreed with the Cost of the Troubles group's attitudes on heart attack victims and suicides but we included only those road accident deaths which were known to have taken place during disturbances. We included deaths in helicopter crashes while violence was taking place in the vicinity, but excluded crashes which happened when there was no violence. (18)

The difficulty of establishing clear limits of inclusion and exclusion in such an understandably sensitive and potentially controversial task forced the editors to debate over what McKittrick calls "borderline cases" (18).

Similar omissions haunt any effort to fully account for the disruptively borderline case of the Long Kesh / Maze Prison hunger strikes. Something always escapes, because each event taking place during the protests is remembered within a code of acknowledgment that fails to capture the meanings it may acquire within other possible codes. A history is always a limited horizon, a discipline of knowledge composed by rules of selection, categorization, inclusion and exclusion through which an event can be recognized as a significant occurrence. The meaning of an event is retrospectively determined both by its relation to other events within the discursive context that discerns it and by the situation of that context in relation to others, and the limits of such a discourse exceed themselves in the act of drawing the circle (or "rounded picture") that distinguishes them. The event pushes at those limits, because it too is haunted by the traces of anticipated meanings it may take on when reiterated elsewhere, in other historical contexts with which its own intersects. The event of the hunger strikes is haunted, most apparently, by the fact that it means differently in unionist and republican histories. This indeterminacy was accentuated when, on 7 May 1981, Ian Paisley competed with his rivals for the proper contents of the past by holding a unionist commemoration service for the "victims of IRA terrorism" at the same hour as Bobby Sands's funeral (Black). Father Liam Mullen, meanwhile, drew attention to this rivalry by urging the Catholic congregation to grieve also for the two victims, including an RUC officer, who had been killed in the violence following Sands's death ("Funeral"). But the historical significance of the hunger strike also exceeds this traditional political binary. As I have noted, common examples of alternative contexts in Ireland are the feminist, ethnic and class histories whose chronologies and goals cannot be reduced to those of mainstream nationalisms. The hunger strikes can also take part and mean otherwise in histories such as those of the legal system, medicine, economics, criminology, psychiatry, ethics, religion, myth, and linguistics, as well as in different subsets of those histories--in politics or economics at international, national, cultural, and local levels, for example. The event is dispersed in unlimited possible positions of significance, confirming what Foucault has described as "our existence among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference" ("Nietzsche" 155). Its force of excess and alterity within any particular history subjects the historical horizon itself to displacement.

This chapter examines how opportunities for historical dispersal and displacement are indicated by the mourning of the hunger strikers--a mourning both of them and by them. Returning to the hunger strikes by resituating what has already been contributed to the "overall history," it shifts the focus from the protest in practise--analyzed by critics including Allen Feldman, Begoña Aretxaga, Padraig O'Malley and Maud Ellman--to the protest in memory. I describe the process of mourning here as a hunger for history, through which we repeatedly return to an indigestible meal of memories that we are unable to finish. My turn to such metaphors is not intended to reduce the hunger strikers' suffering to a comparison between theoretical observations and the often comic utterances of Beckett's fictional characters. I do want to use such descriptions, however, for an analysis of the way in which they are frequently evoked in reconstructions of the history of such an experience. Such a process of historical accounting is one in which we can never "devour all," "moment by glutton moment," as Beckett writes in *Ill Seen Ill Said* (86). We can never "finish with it all at last" by going on "til all recalled," "til no more trace," as the ill-seeing eye aims to do in its repeated return to the "tenacious trace" of the woman who repeatedly returns, in turn, to a tomb (80-81). Instead, we are haunted by the traces of a past, an image, or a lost one whose remains remain unassimilable to the present. In an aporetic combination of indigestion and digestion, remembering and forgetting, destroying and recreating history, both the subject of impossible mourning and what I describe, in an adaptation of Nietzschean terms, as the "critical" historian, repeatedly consume an indigestible past. Through insistent rumination and reiteration, they transform and revalue their object, projecting its identity into the future. Resisting a familiar conclusion that the Irish will be condemned to repeat their past until they properly mourn it, this process suggests the opposite: that their past would be repeated identically only if they were able to properly mourn it. Each time the past reappears in a condition of critical history, its contours are transfigured. Suggesting that identical reproduction of rationalized violence--the repetition of a history of sacrificial martyrdom--is as impossible as the containment of what is past through a complete work of mourning, this critical hunger for history questions the borders of conventional histories of nationalist sacrifice in Ireland, and points to gaps where stories usually sacrificed by those histories can begin to take up, or take on, a provisional position.

I have suggested that this possibility of repositioning is revealed in the promissory language of the decommissioning process, noting that the IRA's 6 May 2000 promise to have weapons inspections coincided with a hunger strike commemoration at which Adams balanced the reiterative and disseminative force of that promise with a monumentalizing and stabilizing account of the dead. He did the same, more recently, by marking the IRA's 23 October 2001 gesture of decommissioning with a speech on this "historic" occasion entitled "The Political Legacy of the Hunger Strike." There he argued that the hunger strike, like decommissioning, could have been resolved through dialogue, but he was careful to add that, because decommissioning is not a defeat but a strategical tactic, the IRA still possess "a sense of themselves" (qtd. in Donnelly, "Adams"). The rhetoric of the 1981 martyrs, and of those who mourn them, performs a similar balancing act. In spite of its frequently monumentalizing objective of uniting Ireland in grief, this mourning retains the same revaluative force that undermines the realization of commitment in decommissioning talks. Feldman has suggested that the strikers undermined British authority only to found their own violence on a new myth of authorizing origins (259). In what follows, I argue instead that their protest rendered such re-foundation impossible. Reading their undermining strategy as one of reiteration and encryption, I argue that it displaced the history of sacrifice that forms their own source of authority and continued, in turn, to disrupt the equally inclusive aim of subsequent commemorations.

Discourse on the hunger strikes both during and since 1981 has been marked "from the first" by reiteration. The British policy of Criminalization, which is often considered the catalyst of the blanket protest and hunger strike, was openly publicized by its architects as a strategy of willful revaluation intended to "normalize" the situation in Northern Ireland. A previous hunger strike led by Billy McKee in the Crumlin Road jail had gained Special Category (or Prisoner of War) status in June 1972 for paramilitary prisoners. These prisoners were allowed to wear their own clothes, to freely associate with each other inside their own compound huts (or "cages"), to receive extra visits and food parcels, and to be exempted from prison work. Four years later, as part of the Criminalization program, Special Category status began to be phased out: prisoners convicted of terrorist-related offenses after 1 March 1976--the same kind of offenses that a day earlier would have made them political prisoners--were classified as "ordinary" criminals and confined to the newly constructed H-Block cells. After this cut-off date, architectural divisions within Long Kesh prison (which was rechristened "The Maze" as part of the redefinition process) emphasized the way in which such an arbitrarily drawn limit was unable to simply separate two systems of categorization. While the newly constructed H-Blocks housed its "ordinary" criminals, the Maze was obliged to maintain a troubling trace of the previous system in separate compounds that housed the remaining Special Category "political" prisoners convicted of similar crimes before the cut-off date. The aim of criminalization, as David Beresford explains, was to portray the conflict as "a law and order issue, rather than a war," to emphasize "the 'criminality' of terrorism, with a stream of rhetoric from politicians and police commanders referring to the 'godfathers' of the IRA, to ‘gangs,’ ‘thugs’ and ‘racketeering,’” and to “remove the formal distinctions between paramilitary prisoners and ‘common’ criminals” (25)--in short, to deny the republican interpretation of the conflict. There was now no such thing as a war in Northern Ireland, and no such thing as politically justifiable crime. As Thatcher later put it, in a typically obstinate statement that nevertheless epitomizes the reiterative rhetorical nature of the revaluation the government was attempting to accomplish, “a crime is a crime is a crime. It is not political, it is a crime” (qtd. in Beresford 115).

The “blanket” protest began when Kieran Nugent, the first inmate classified as an ordinary criminal under the new system, refused to wear his prison uniform and was joined in his protest for the restoration of special category status by other republican inmates, whose numbers rose to over 300 by 1978 and over 400 by 1980. The conflict escalated as guards countered the protest with increasingly violent assaults and deprivations of prisoners’ rights. The “no-wash” protests developed in 1978 in response to continued beatings, forced nakedness, harrassment, and physically invasive strip searches by guards on the way to and from shower facilities and toilets. The same year, this turned into the “dirty protest” when prisoners refused to leave their cells or to empty their chamber pots in the presence of guards who used the occasion to abuse them and spill the pots’ contents onto the prisoners’ bodies, floors, blankets and mattresses. Prevented also from throwing it out of their windows, prisoners resorted to spreading their feces over their cell walls and ceilings. On 27 October 1980, seven H-Block prisoners began a hunger strike and put five official demands to the British government: the right to wear their own clothes; to be exempt from prison work; to freely associate with other prisoners; to organize their own recreational and educational programmes and receive weekly letters, parcels and visits; and to have the standard 50% remission time of their prison sentences restored after having lost this right during previous protests. They were joined on hunger strike on 1 December by three women led by Mairead Farrell at Armagh jail, where inmates had already begun a dirty protest of their own for political status in response to physical assaults and sexual harrassment by guards during cell searches. On 18 December, only a few days after being joined by more H-Block prisoners, the strikers called off their protest after being pressured by the context of Sean McKenna's imminent death into an ambiguous and officially unclarified settlement with British negotiators, which made only partial concessions to their demands. On 1 March 1981 (the fifth anniversary of the phase-out of Special Category status), Bobby Sands began the second series of hunger strikes in the H-Blocks. Rather than concede to their five demands, the British government allowed ten prisoners to die over the seven-month period of these strikes: Sands, Francis Hughes, Raymond McCreesh, Patsy O'Hara, Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Kieran Doherty, Thomas McElwee, and Michael Devine. The strike was called off on 3 October after several of the dying men's families chose to take them off the fast by authorizing medical intervention.

This series of protests responded to criminalization, in part, by redeploying the state's strategy against it. They redirected the government's revaluation of "crime," and at the same time redirected stereotypically familiar descriptions of themselves as "barbarous" and "violent." Combatting these determinations by reproducing them in the increasingly "savage" condition of their bodies and cells, they returned them to the

British, just as future republicans were to return "decommissioning." While Thatcher, commenting on the riots following Sands's death, could say that she regretted "the loss of life through all forms of violence in Northern Ireland" (15 May 1981, qtd. in "Thatcher Replies"), the strikers, as Feldman and Aretxaga have argued, were graphically revealing the violence of her administration and confronting the state with an image of its own savagery (Feldman 236; Aretxaga 137). As Sands put it in his *Prison Writings*, in a metaphor that articulates the re-location of "exposure" from the body of the blanket protestor who refuses clothes to the governing body of an imperial state without clothes, "the face of British barbarity has once again been nakedly exposed in front of the world" (218). His writings also accentuate the way in which the familiar stigma of the "dirty" Irish and the recently re-emphasized stigma of insurgent "criminality" were taken on by the dirty protest and turned on the British: "War criminals! I said to myself. They're a stinking, dirty shower of war criminals, every last one of them" (34). The protestors, to recontextualize the words of Zarathustra, reaffirmed Thatcher's reiterative insistence on criminality with the exclamatory cry, "'Very well! Once more!'" (*Thus* 326). They pointed out that to insist that "a crime is a crime is a crime" was a crime: "'The law is right,' the judge will cite, / The public must have care. / A crime is a crime in any mind / Committed anywhere.' / Hypocritical, parasitical bastards / Cry 'Hurray!'" (Sands 116). Ellman has described this dynamic as a "struggle for the sign" in which both sides were engaged. "By resisting the bounds imposed upon their bodies," she writes, "the Irish prisoners were also struggling against the definitions imposed upon their acts" (88). Adams has offered a similar summary: "In 1976, the British government tried to criminalize the republican prisoners. In 1981, the republican prisoners criminalized the British government" (*Free* 82).

Responding to this exchange, accounts of the hunger strikes tend to oscillate between two kinds of conclusion. Most academic critics begin by concurring, in their own terms, with Kearney's main premise about the strikers' strategies. In order to legitimate their actions, the strikers "commemoratively exploited" a traditional republican ideology of martyrdom and sacrifice as a path to renewal (*Postnationalist* 110). As Kearney notes, this "mythic logic which claimed that defeat is victory, failure is triumph, past is present," was fostered by the sacrificial rhetoric of figures like Pearse--who argued that "bloodshed is a cleansing and sanctifying thing"--and Terence MacSwiney, the Sinn Féin lord mayor of Cork, who died on hunger strike in Brixton Prison in 1920 after famously declaring, "it is not those who can inflict the most, but those who suffer the most who will conquer" (qtd. in *Postnationalist* 111). Invoking this "'sacred' memory of death and renewal which provided legitimation for present acts of suffering by grafting them onto paradigms of a recurring past," the hunger strikers combined contemporary politics with the promise of redemption. Like the republican movement it aimed to represent, the hunger strike operated "in terms of two distinguishable, if not always distinct discourses: on the one hand, the secular discourse of military action and social struggle; on the other, the mythic discourse of sacrificial martyrdom" (*Postnationalist* 113).

While the complexities of any account resist simple segregation, two general strands of opinion emerge most clearly from here, strands whose loose ends often overlap in the same text as writers deal with the question of whether the protests resulted in repetition or development, stasis or advancement, loss or profit for the republican movement. First there is the view, voiced by O'Malley, that the strikers' insistent recollection of the past, "their sense of being in psychological union with their Republican forebears, part of the eternal cycle of sacrifice and rebirth," was ultimately detrimental to the movement. The strikers tried "to preempt history, not just to replicate the actions of the dead generations but to appropriate their very words to ensure total identification with the mythical paradigm being reenacted" (116). Promoting the concept of unbroken continuity between the living and the dead, he concludes that they were trapped in "an action-response pattern that endlessly repeats itself," a pattern in which "there is little [. . .] reasoning and questioning, and certainly no inventiveness" (287). As they become martyrs in turn, the pattern is re-legitimated in the minds of their mourners--mourners who count them in, I would add, on the list of names cited previously by Sands in a characteristic passage which suggests that identification is generated not only by repetitive remembrance, but by remembrance of repetition:

> There is no future in Ireland under oppression, only the same tragic history repeating itself in every decade. [. . .] We republican blanketmen in H Block remember only too well our countless James Connollys, Robert Emmets, Frank Staggs, Terence MacSwineys, and never do we forget that be it the English devil or the lackey devil, the result is always the same--oppression and torture. [. . .] The repetition continues as the present generation of Irish men and women likewise rot and die and are relentlessly tortured. (203-04)

A more common form of account, found in academic, journalistic, and officially republican statements, treats the strikes as a progressive, rather than repetitive, event. It puts them in what Robert Ballagh has called their "proper place," assimilating them into a continuous history of national development on what is often described as the "path toward peace." This view, which aims understandably to establish narratives of successful resistance against British oppression, echoes the prisoners' official statement on the end of the second strike: "We believe that the age old struggle for Irish self-determination and freedom has been immeasurably advanced by this hunger strike and therefore we claim a massive political victory" (Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan 264). Bik McFarlane, who co-ordinated the second phase of strikes from inside the H-Blocks, had anticipated such a statement in a smuggled letter, or 'comm,' to Adams (then vice-president of Sinn Féin). "Our losses have been heavy," he wrote, "yet I feel that the part we have played in forwarding the liberation struggle has been great. Terrific gains have been made and the Brits are losing by the day. The sacrifice called for is the ultimate and the men have made it heroically" (qtd. in Beresford 329). As he repeated in 1998, employing a metaphor echoed the following year when McGuinness described the republican dead as "a point of reference, a touchstone" (Introduction 2), "the deaths of those men was the cornerstone for wider political development" (qtd. in "Remembering"). It is a stone that does not "trouble the living stream," as Yeats suggested of the hearts and headstones of 1916.[1] Instead it allows for what is frequently called a "watershed."[2] It was, as the authors of *Lost Lives* point out, "one of the key events in the development of Sinn Féin as a political force in Northern Ireland," "the genesis of what would eventually become the peace process," and "a political launching pad, serving as the foundation of Sinn Féin's subsequent electoral success" (McKittrick et al., 857-58). On the twentieth anniversary of the strikes, the *Irish Post* concluded similarly that the strikers' deaths "helped make Sinn Féin a major electoral force and precipitated the peace process that eventually led to the Good Friday Agreement" (28 April 2001), and was seconded in its account of political gain by the University of Ulster's Paul Arthur, interviewed by the *Financial Times*: "The republican leadership had to start moving from being a conspiratorial organisation to a democratic organisation. [. . .] It was a huge shift in attitude. There would have been no cease-fire, no Good Friday Agreement, no ministers ready for government, without it" (qtd. in Carnegy). This form of description is claimed officially for the republican movement in Adams' writings. Beginning with Sands's election to Westminster as MP for Fermanagh/South Tyrone on 9 April 1981 (a seat regained by Owen Carron in the by-election after Sands's death) and the elections of his fellow prisoners, Kieran Doherty and Paddy Agnew, to the Irish Parliament two months later, the hunger strikes "set in train a process which continued

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[1] "Hearts with one purpose alone / Through summer and winter seem / Enchanted to a stone / To trouble the living stream" (Yeats, *Collected* 204). Lloyd offers a reading of this image from Yeats's "Easter 1916" as both a foundation stone and a "gravestone on which the names of

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the national martyrs are inscribed" (*Anomalous* 71-72).

[2] "The hunger strike may be seen as a watershed in the Anglo-Irish conflict" (Beresford 430); "the year [1981] is regarded as a troubles watershed" (McKittrick et al., 846); "the impact of the hunger strikes on republican politics, on Irish politics and indeed on Britain's policy here in Ireland [. . .] has been described as a watershed and there is no other description for it" (Martin Ferris, qtd. in "Lesson"); "Indeed the hunger strikes proved to be a watershed in the long struggle between the British state and the Irish movement for national independence" (Adams, *Before* 72).

through to the Hillsborough treaty" (Adams, *Free* 72). They paved the way for later Westminster wins by Adams and McGuinness, and marked "the beginning of the end of British rule in Ireland" (Adams, *Before* 317). *Gaol History*, the document provided by republicans for the education of new prisoners, opens with an appropriately economical question: "Was the hunger strike worth it?" (qtd. in "Lessons"). In these commemorative descriptions, the answer seems at first to be an unqualified "yes"--one that responds forcefully to a state of political injustice, but at the same time overlooks its potential for becoming the kind of divisive and reiterative "yes" which has also been used as an effective strategy of resistance.[3]

2. Forgetting

To settle fully for either of the above views--of identical repetition or cumulative progress--would be to close the account by "coming to terms" with the dead. It would mean profiting from their loss through the kind of complete historical comprehension that Nietzsche calls forgetting. To forget, he writes in his 1873 essay "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," is to establish a sense of presence by "assimilat[ing] and appropriat[ing] the things of the past" (62-63). This description builds on his analysis the same year of "the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention," in "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense" (181). It is the obligation of historical accounting acknowledged by Beckett's Molloy, who interrupts his narrative to admit, "I am merely complying with the convention that demands you either lie or hold your peace. For what really happened was quite different" (116). For Nietzsche, the knowledge that one is merely comp-lying must necessarily be forgotten: "Now man of course forgets that matters are going thus with him" (181), he writes, because "only by means of forgetfulness can man ever arrive at imagining that he possesses 'truth'" (177). Truth, in other words, is an illusion that can be found and sustained only by forgetting that it is a conceptual construct. Forgetting maintains faith in a "truth in itself" (184), a faith which "forgets that the original metaphors of perception *are* metaphors, and takes them for the things themselves" (183). Having allowed the events of the past simply to die, the temporarily forgetful or "unhistorical" subject succeeds in "drawing a horizon around itself" ("Uses" 63)--an "encompassing cloud," or "envelope"--and is able "to transform and incorporate into [itself] what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken moulds" (62). This subject achieves a state of animalistic peace in contrast to humankind's common state of agitation: "the man says 'I remember' and envies the animal, who at once forgets and for whom every moment really dies, sinks back into the night and fog and is extinguished for ever. Thus the animal lives unhistorically: for it is contained in the present, like a number without any awkward fraction left over." It is briefly blind to the "invisible burden" of that which remains other to the present, exceeding comprehension and symbolization, and which always "returns as a ghost and disturbs the peace of a later moment" (61). In this capacity for containment, forgetting resembles the complete mourning in which a fully interiorizing memory appears to have absorbed and abolished the "non-totalizable trace" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 38) of the lost one.

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[3] In spite of their often complex and informative analysis of the issues involved, summaries of the ultimate value of the strikes can work against their own gestures of resistance by lifting the question of profit versus loss into a sphere that transcends its opposing terms, achieving the ultimate profit of overcoming contradiction in a higher form of understanding. David Beresford's impressively detailed and frequently cited account of the injustices of the hunger strike, for example, also tends toward a desire for transcendence when it suggests that "hunger-striking, when taken to the death, has a sublime quality about it" (38), and when it suggests that, just as the age-old struggle between nations "goes beyond the mundanities of borders, constitutions and governmental systems," so also "the hunger strike rises above the rights or wrongs of penal administration, of politicians' posturing on the criminality of 'terrorism'" and becomes instead "the stuff of tragedy, of Shakespearean proportions" (430-31).

Nietzsche focuses in "Uses" on two common forms of forgetting: the "monumental" and "antiquarian" modes of historicization. In the monumental mode, certain figures and events from the past, certain "great moments in the struggle of the human individual," are celebrated as examples to live by, and are understood as part of a "chain [that] unites mankind across the millennia like a range of human mountain peaks" (68). A history of great anniversaries (70-72), monumentalization ignores the possibility of new greatness in the present. Resisting change by seeking to identically reproduce the "full icon-like veracity" of past figures, it allows "the dead [to] bury the living" (70) in the same gesture with which the living bury the dead. Making "what is dissimilar look similar," it "deceives by analogies: with seductive similarities it inspires the courageous to foolhardiness and the inspired to fanaticism" (71). Where monumental history selects and compares, antiquarian history collects indiscriminately. Within the antiquarian's "restricted field of vision," everything old is revered, while "everything new and evolving, is rejected and persecuted." It is an accumulative history, a "blind rage for collecting, a restless raking together of everything that has ever existed" to the point that one becomes "content to gobble down any food whatever" (75). The history of a nation or a city becomes, for the antiquarian, "the history of himself; he reads its walls, its towered gate, its rules and regulations, its holidays, like an illuminated diary of his youth and in all this he finds again himself" as the representative "spirit of his house, his race, his city" (73). He cultivates the sense of a nation which has never "ceased to be faithful to its own origins," and thus has never become restless in search of novelty--a sense that "makes the less favoured races and peoples contented with their own homeland and its customs, and restrains them from roving abroad in search of something they think more worth having and engaging in battles for it." Aiming "to read the past quickly and correctly no matter how intricate its palimpsest may be," this view "spreads a simple feeling of pleasure and contentment over the modest, rude, even wretched conditions in which a man or a nation lives," and reassures people with "the contentment of the tree in its roots, the happiness of knowing that one is not wholly accidental and arbitrary but grown out of a past as its heir, flower and fruit, and that one's existence is thus excused, and, indeed, justified" (73-74). Like the monumental view, it is a means of preservation rather than creation, which "undervalues that which is becoming" (75) and so shields itself from the possibility of emergence and revaluation.

In isolation (although, as I will go on to show, for Nietzsche forgetting is never isolated from its opposite, and accounts of the hunger strikes cannot be simplified to such a degree) both repetitive and progressive interpretations of the hunger strikers' legacy can be read as forgetful in the sense that they contain difference within sameness. Insofar as they aim to present the past, they avoid the insight, offered also by Claude Lévi-Strauss, that a history is always both partial and partial (*Savage* 258). As Lévi-Strauss puts it, history is always an encoded epistemological method. It is incapable of arriving at a complete account which would confirm the illusion of a "totalizing continuity of [a] self" (256) that has gathered every possible strand of its past together. History does not amount to "the passage from one state to another in a continuous form" (256), as the monumental historian would have it, but is rather "a discontinuous set composed of domains of history, each of which is defined by a characteristic frequency and by a differential coding of *before* and *after*" (258).[4] In the *Archaeology*, Foucault follows both Lévi-Strauss and Nietzsche in opposing the tendency of historicization to ignore the emergent force of events propelled by chance and accident, and to impose upon them instead a "network of causality" and "relations of analogy" within a naturalized law that "accounts for [the] cohesion" of a period or a discourse, presenting a seamless narrative in which all events are reduced to expressing "one and the same central core" or world view (9-10). Echoing Nietzsche's description of the antiquarian historian who equates his own history with that of his homeland, Foucault describes "continuous history" as a form of comprehension in which one is travelling always homeward to discover oneself:

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[4] Using the example of necessarily selective chronologies to emphasize his point, Lévi-Strauss discusses "classes" of dates in terms that prefigure later discussions of meaning created in a network of relational contexts: "a date is a *member* of a class. These classes of dates are definable by the meaningful character each date has within the class in relation to other dates which also belong to it, and by the absence of this meaningful character with respect to dates appertaining to a different class. Thus the date 1685 belongs to a class of which 1610, 1648, 1715 are likewise members; but it means nothing in relation to the class composed of the dates: 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th millenium . . . [or] 23 January, 17 August, 30 September, etc" (259). Other examples Lévi-Strauss uses to illustrate his theory are clearly applicable to the conflict of incompatible histories in Northern Ireland that served as the backdrop for the hunger strikes. "When one proposes to write a history of the French Revolution," he argues, "one knows [. . .] that it cannot, simultaneously and under the same heading, be that of the Jacobin and that of the aristocrat. [. . .] One must select as the principal either one [or the other,] or a third (for there are an infinite number of them) and give up the attempt to find in history a totalization of the set of partial totalizations" (258). The competition between republican and colonial narratives arrives at a similar impasse in which, as Lévi-Strauss goes on to point out, any history thus selected is itself subject to a process of infinitely divisible selection from within its own terms. "Each episode in a revolution or a war resolves itself into a multitude of individual psychic movements" which in turn break apart into multiple episodes in an "infinite regress" toward the chaos that would, if it were possible, constitute "a truly total history" (257).

> Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding of the subject: the guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him; the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject--in the form of historical consciousness--will once again be able to appropriate, to bring back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. (12)

In historical determinations of the hunger strikes, to come to terms with the past would also be to come home, as O'Malley suggests when describing his writing process as a "voyage of self-discovery, the narrative in part reflecting my own struggle to come to terms with the myths of my Irish past, to better understand the psychological causes that separate the people who share the island of Ireland" (284). One goal of the accounts cited above seems to be to find oneself in presentations of the past as either an identically consistent or seamlessly continuous "history of sacrifice." Yet these accounts also allow for the opposite, for a discontinuous "sacrifice of history," by revealing the insufficiency of the terms at which they otherwise seem to arrive.

This oscillation between a history of sacrifice and a sacrifice of history is played out in Feldman's *Formations of Violence*. Feldman begins with an enabling reading of the prisoners' resistance to assimilation. He argues that they challenged the state's violent strategies of subject-formation and historicization by taking them on, in both senses of the phrase, and redirecting them. By deliberately "stag[ing]" and refiguring its abuse on their newly instrumentalized bodies, they submitted to a "deflating mimesis" the state's "penal imperative to incorporate the panoptic presence of the Other as a form of compliance and subjugation" (236). While he does not refer to Bhabha's analysis of colonial mimicry, Feldman analyzes a similar dynamic here. For Bhabha, the colonizer engages in an ambivalent effort to represent and identify the colonized as a subject that is both the same as the colonizer (civilizable) and yet different (uncivilized), both knowable and unknown. This "desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as *a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" ("Mimicry" 235, emph. Bhabha's), is a fetishistic form of stereotyping that both disavows and recognizes difference, and so returns to the colonizer. As colonized subjects repeat the codes of the colonizer both with a difference and at a distance, they present them with a displaced and distorted mirror image of themselves, one that accentuates the otherness that inhabits both their own sense of identity and their ability to identify or define others: "the look of surveillance returns as the displacing gaze of the disciplined, [. . .] the observer becomes the observed and the 'partial' representation rearticulates the whole notion of identity and alienates it from essence" (238). Emphasizing the displacement of authority involved in such a reiteration (a delegitimating displacement which Bhabha later refigures as a "melancholic revolt"), Feldman argues that by becoming "a mimetic part of the state," the protestors performed an "inverting and bitter interiorization" of its power, using the body of the prisoner "to recodify and to transfer state power from one topos to another" (236-37). Through the self-directed violence of defilement and starvation, they accentuated and defamiliarized the previously normalized processes of state violence by rendering them inescapably visible. As Aretxaga recapitulates in her analysis of the dirty protest--a point Lloyd develops into a description of how the strikers "stage their antagonism to the state by performing the excess of *its* violence as a means to questioning its legitimacy" (*Ireland* 60, emph. Lloyd's)--the strikers became the controlling subjects, rather than the controlled objects, of a defiling power. While appropriating traditional stereotypes of the uncivilized Irish, they also exposed and reproduced "the savagery of state policies" on their dirty (and later emaciated) bodies. In doing so, they unsettled the state's distinction between modern and primitive, acting as "a mirror of colonial barbarism that reflected back to prison officers and the British public an obscured image of themselves that challenged their identity as a civilized nation" (Aretxaga 137).

Feldman extends this dynamic of resistance to the prisoners' disruptions of history. Borrowing terms from Foucault, he argues that the protests exposed history as "a cultural object susceptible to alteration" and demonstrated that power lies in controlling the ways in which this object is produced and reproduced (233-34). For the prisoners, the possibility of seizing such power came from the fact that historical narratives are inscribed on the body. As Foucault has put it, borrowing in turn from Nietzsche, "the body is the inscribed surface of events" ("Nietzsche" 148); its behaviour is prescribed, regulated, and disciplined by the dominant discourses of knowledge within a given period. "No discursive object," Feldman explains, "exists outside of, or prior to, a discursive formation." "Engendered through narration," the self always "speaks from a position of having been narrated and edited by others--by political institutions, by concepts of historical causality, and possibly by violence" (13). The violence of a colonial narrative written on their bodies by the state offered the prisoners the opportunity to demonstrate that, if the subjects of history are produced by narration, they can always be performatively re-narrated. Thus, while the state sought to impose the chronology of criminal rehabilitation upon them, the prisoners opposed this "juridical time of the penalogical regime" with the suddenly accelerated "biological time" of their dying bodies (225). They also briefly "reversed [the] historical trajectory" of colonialism in the sense that during their incarceration they gained, rather than lost, a Gaelic language and culture, which again resisted comprehension and assimilation by the system (227). Ultimately, for Feldman, the transfer of power--its recodification, inversion, and dissemination--is realized through mourning. Having "purified" the rationale for republican violence by exposing that of the state, they sent this re-legitimating narrative away from themselves. They interiorized, neutralized, and stored the state's power "in the corpse of the hunger striker for use by his support community." "The subsequent sacralization of the dead hunger striker," he argues, "completed the process of purification and commemorated the subverting transfer of power from the state to the insurgent community with elaborate funeral processions and mortuary displays," as well as the subsequent reproduction of republican and H-Block icons (236-37).

Yet Feldman concludes that in the end the strikers reduced their own disruptive historical action to "recursive and ritualized closure" (263-64). They delegitimated the state's violence, but aimed simultaneously to relegitimate that of the republican movement on the same essentializing model: an "opposition of [sacrificial] victimage and mastery" (264). The main goal of the protest, he notes, was to redifferentiate political prisoners from common criminals, and to redefine their violence as revolutionary rather than sectarian (259). In the sense that their sacrifice aimed both to restore these hierarchies and distinctions that were threatened by the state's policy of criminalization and to "authoriz[e] subsequent violence" on the basis of those distinctions, they were "condemned to perpetuate political violence" (265). Here Feldman's argument moves away from the ideas of Nietzsche and Foucault and responds to those of René Girard.

For Girard, the sacrificial act responds to a "crisis of distinctions" between pure and impure violence in a community (Girard 51-52). This crisis is a period during which, instead of being directed outward against a common enemy in a way that harmonizes the community, violence is directed inward in the form of chaotic, self-perpetuating, and apparently interminable cycles of vengeance that efface the differences and hierarchical classifications (between individuals and values) that sustain a cultural order. After such a period of non-differentiation and desymbolization when "contagious" and reciprocal violence spreads throughout the community, distinctions are restored by an act of sacrifice. In the sacrificial act, violence is polarized and redirected against a substitute, or scapegoat, "whose death will provoke no further reprisals" (36), and in distinction to whom the community re-establishes its boundaries and its sense of group identity. Containing the cycle of mimetic revenge and retaliation by displacing and ritualizing it as a cultural form, the community finds "a passage out" (259) of orderless violence and embarks on a "historical progression to new levels and dynamics of social structuration"

(Feldman 258), an "evolution from ritual to secular institutions," through which members of the community "gradually draw away from violence" (Girard 307). Attributing a magical power to the sacrificial victim who has allowed them to reinforce peaceful institutions, the community continues to re-enact the founding act of sacrifice in ritualized forms of victimization and exclusion intended to maintain their stabilized social framework.

Feldman argues that the strikers' actions reveal the impossibility of such an escape from, or transcendence of, violence. He concedes that the hunger strike "temporarily abolished the opposition of victimage and mastery" fostered by the prison system by internalizing this relation and fusing the subject and object of violence into a single self-destructive body. But by using their sacrifice to relegitimate subsequent republican violence, he adds, they reinscribed this binary opposition into new configurations (264). They fell prey to what he calls the "central conundrum of Girard's thesis": the fact that "the sacrificial act can only sublate other forms of violence [. . .] by the ritual repetition of violence" (260) in the form of sacrifice. Sacrifice itself then becomes the subject of mimicry and emulation, and is perpetuated as a code for constructing political and historical narratives of legitimation. In this schema, "violence still remains the founding language of social representation" (260-61). Because one form of violence is produced through an interdependent and reactive relationship to the violence it aims to transcend, it is ultimately impossible to reach Girard's goal of arriving at "a form of violence incapable of serving as a connecting link between the violent act that preceded and the one that must follow, [. . .] a radically new type of violence, truly decisive and self-contained, [. . .] that will put an end once and for all to violence itself" (Girard 27). During the hunger strikes, Feldman argues, the hegemonic binary of master and victim was either reversed and replicated (in the republicans' relation to the British) or re-applied (both in the prisoners' goal of hierarchical differentiation from other prisoners, and in the post-strike campaign in which republican and loyalist prisoners, seeking segregation from one another, deliberately agreed to exchange sacrificial victims in order to force the issue with prison authorities [266]). Reversing the historical rupture they had achieved, the strikers seemed, at least temporarily, to return to a system of rigid ideological binaries.

A connection can be drawn here to his remarks in a later essay, "Violence and Vision," in which he criticizes the "ideological imaginaries" or "rigid discriminatory and context-bound classification grids in language and discourse" that can be used to differentiate and justify acts of violence. In this essay, he argues that violence in Northern Ireland, enabled by a network of highly visible polarized ethnic and political categorizations, is often characterized by this kind of "moral discrimination" in which "the dominant morality is not a matter of choosing nonviolence over violence but of morally legitimizing one act of violence in another." It is a morality in which today's acts of violence continue to be "proposed and popularly received as reenactments, replications, analogies, and echoes of earlier acts in a linear trajectory that eventually recedes toward an elusive historical horizon line of first injury, first assault, and first death dating back to the Cromwellian Plantation if not earlier." The tendency of such thinking is to absorb the disruptive potential of violent acts into an essentializing and regressive pattern of temporal mimesis “where each act of violence repeats another and both epitomizes and renews the dualism of the political culture” (“Violence” 35-36). Like O’Malley, Feldman argues in his conclusion to *Formations of Violence* that the hunger strikers were susceptible to a trap of historical replication where the imposition of essentializing narratives on acts of violence “prescribe[s] the manner in which violence is to be remembered, depicted, and recorded, and therefore reproduced as consciousness and agency” (“Violence” 56).

With this second move, Feldman appears on one hand to impose the kind of historical closure he criticizes in the prisoners themselves. Coming at the end of his account, his description of their tendency to limit their possibilities tends, in turn, to lock them into an inescapable and self-perpetuating history of sacrifice. His reading of communal scapegoating seems to resist the disseminative treatment of surrogate victimage offered by Derrida, for whom the poisonous scapegoat (or *pharmakos*) cast out of the city is undecidably encrypted, becoming the necessary other that both constitutes and disables ideological presence and the closure of communal boundaries (“Plato’s” 132-33). Yet Feldman’s first, more excessive, description of resistance has already staged an escape from the bounds of this kind of conclusion before it arrives. His history of sacrifice, in other words, is sacrificed by his previous recognition that historical closure cannot be sustained. With this oscillation, Feldman’s text enacts the idea that while we cannot avoid drawing historical limits, we can remain aware of the irresolvable tension between the desire to capture history and the necessary excess or loss that propels the desire. We can remain aware, to reiterate Lloyd’s description, of “the excess of possible histories, subject positions [. . .] or memories over the singular history through which the state"--or the historian--"seeks to incorporate and regulate its political subjects" (*Ireland* 84). Such a view of history recognizes that the hunger for history is hung on a hinge "between totality and infinity," and dies there. Unable to settle on either, it "keeps to the difference" between them (Derrida, "Violence" 123).

3. The Sacrifice of History

To keep to the difference, as Feldman does, is to perform a balancing act between possibilities that resembles what Nietzsche describes as a critical history, in which a troubling memory coincides with the peace of forgetting that enables conclusions to be drawn at all. Far from being entirely negative, the remainderless reminderless state of forgetting is, as Nietzsche re-affirms in the *Genealogy*, a "positive faculty of repression," a "*tabula rasa* of the consciousness" which preserves "psychic order [and] repose" (*Genealogy* 2.1). As a method of containing difference within sameness, presenting the past, and forgetting the disruptive and haunting force of the dead who cannot be contained, it permits the subject to feel sovereign, self-sustaining, and able to act. It provides the foundation--illusory but necessary--that lets him "dare to begin" ("Uses" 64). "There could be no happiness," writes Nietzsche, "no cheerfulness, no hope, no pride, no *present*, without forgetfulness" (*Genealogy* 2.1). Forgetfulness needs to be complemented, however, by the willful remembering that characterizes critical history. The critical historian treads a dividing line between memory and oblivion, between the historical sense and the unhistorical sense:

> Cheerfulness, the good conscience, the joyful deed, confidence in the future--all of them depend, in the case of the individual as of a nation, on the existence of a line dividing the bright and discernible from the unilluminable and dark; on one's being just as able to forget at the right time as to remember at the right time; on the possession of a powerful instinct for sensing when it is necessary to feel historically and when unhistorically. ("Uses" 63)

When willfully chosen, forgetting is a powerful escape that divides the moment in which a "vivid flash" of insight is gained into the illusoriness of history (64). In this moment of insight, the critical historian shatters the acquired truths of the history that have been passed down to him. "If he is to live," Nietzsche explains, "man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it." He regards his inherited narrative critically, "takes the knife to its roots," and "cruelly tramples over every kind of piety." This is "always a dangerous process" (76), however, not only for history but for the historian, because in violating his history with the memory that it is no more than an imposed system of rules that are "empty in themselves, violent and unfinalized" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 151), he sacrifices his own foundations; he undermines the platform of presence that is required if he is to stand security for his own future. If the "annihilating" judgment of the historical sense is allowed to reign "*without restraint*," it "uproots the future because it destroys illusions and robs the things that exist of the atmosphere in which alone they can live. [. . .] If the historical drive does not also contain a drive to construct, if the purpose of destroying and clearing is not to allow a future already alive in anticipation to raise its house on the ground thus liberated, [. . .] then the instinct for creation will be enfeebled and discouraged" ("Uses" 95). Anticipating his own repetitions of this idea in *Zarathustra* and *Ecce Homo*,[5] Nietzsche argues here that re-creation requires a new phase of forgetting and "hav[ing] done" (*Genealogy* 2.1) with the past as other in order to establish enough false presence of mind to act with conviction ("Uses" 102). The critical historian thus chooses also, in the moment of memory and insight, to fashion new illusions. His act of judging and destroying is part of a broader strategy of reconstituting the events of the past in order to provide for himself not only a new present, but an alternative future. To the obligation to lie "according to habits of centuries' standing" ("On Truth" 81), he opposes the will to remember ourselves otherwise, to "combat our inborn heritage and implant in ourselves a new habit, a new instinct," "to give oneself, as it were *a posteriori*, a past in which one would like to originate in opposition to that in which one did originate" ("Uses" 76). If forgetting is a strategy for repressing one's knowledge that historical truth is constructed, remembering is a way of willfully reactivating that knowledge and putting it to use in the construction of alternative histories based on further forgetting. While forgetting is a form of simplified oblivion, remembering-and-forgetting is a way of strategically "unlearn[ing]" (122) and reconfiguring the past.

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[5] "And he who has to be a creator in good and evil, truly, has first to be a destroyer and break values. Thus the greatest evil belongs with the greatest good: this, however, is the creative good" (*Thus* 139). In *Ecce Homo*, as Kaufmann notes (327 t.n), Nietzsche quotes himself with a difference, replacing destiny ("has to be") with will ("wants to be"), and omitting the reference to truth: "And whoever wants to be a creator in good and evil, must first be an annihilator and break values" (327).

In this reading of the "critical historian," I depart from the explicit descriptions in "Uses" in order to understand the figure at the point where his conceptual strategies meet with those suggested in Nietzsche's later writings and with the historical sense implied by impossible mourning. Viewing him in the context of revaluative commitment, I want to offer a treatment of the "critical historian" as one who, while adopting the qualities both of the human who remembers and the animal who forgets, concurs with the more complex animals who tell Zarathustra that "'existence begins in every instant'" (*Thus* 234). This historian does so by saying "yes" to the reiterability that allows him to be both a product and a producer of history. Recognizing that the "mobile army of metaphors" is all we have, he chooses to martial them to his own advantage, to provisionally retrain the troops that will eventually fall under another's command. Paul Hamilton makes a similar point when he argues that Nietzsche breaks with the metaphysical tradition by both recognizing and accepting the inescapability of illusions, dissolving the line between appearance and reality. When appearance, and rhetoric, are the only knowable reality, the only alternative to the nihilism that would result from such a knowledge is "to embrace the only world we have, to esteem its expression of our will to power, and to relocate truth and value in that" (Hamilton 116). This critical historian, who accepts that "every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons" (Nietzsche, *Will* 330), opens himself to two recognitions at once. On the one hand, he knows that "the world with which we are concerned [. . .] is not a fact but a fable," that "it is 'in flux,' as something in a state of becoming, as a falsehood always changing but never getting near the truth." On the other, he accepts that he has the power to make even this knowledge appear false: "To impose upon becoming the character of being--that is the supreme will to power" (*Will* 330). The will to power might also be understood as a will to self-deception: "It is not enough that you understand in what ignorance man and beast live; you must also have and acquire the *will* to ignorance. You need to grasp that without this kind of ignorance life itself would be impossible, that it is a condition under which alone the living thing can preserve itself and prosper: a great, firm dome of ignorance must encompass you" (*Will* 328). Nailed together by the same "hammer [which] rages cruelly against its prison" (*Ecce* 309), any such dome--like the new house or "new habit" described in "Uses"--is itself always a historical construct open to revaluation. Like the sovereign subject whose birth is his death, this pleasure dome that preserves psychic order is destroyed in the act of creation, its foundations undermined by the knowledge that it is being established only through anticipation of its own imminent reiteration on the sign-chain of appropriation and interpretation--a chain from which, like the chain of history, "it is not possible wholly to free oneself" ("Uses" 76).

Those who create *a posteriori* a new history and origin, and with it a "second nature, so that our first nature withers away," do so "knowing that this first nature was once a second nature and that every victorious second nature will [in turn] become a first" ("Uses" 77). As in the case of the Unnamable who repeatedly sacrifices himself by using words as an antidote for the contagion of words, the critical historian defeats his own aim by employing history as a cure for history. As a project of mourning, his historical sense conceives the borders of a present that might encompass the past only in relation to the past as something irretrievably other. Yet, like the endlessly supplementary process of writing that both allows for the thought of a self beyond writing and prevents such a self from coming into existence, this historical sense which disrupts the present is his only available tool for conceiving of a new history and a new present, a new place of forgetfulness at which he can never arrive. Remembering to forget, he discovers that there is always more to be written, and always more to recall. He cannot escape the paradox where "the origin of historical culture [. . .] *must* itself be known historically," where "history *must* itself resolve the problem of history" and "knowledge *must* turn its sting against itself" in order for an age to "contain anything new, powerful, original and promising more life" (102-03). For the critical historian who annihilates history to begin wholly anew, the line drawn between himself and the past anticipates readjustment by others, or by himself as other, for his moments of insight both oppose and belong to history. The moment of seeming to stand outside history wielding a knife is itself a historical gesture. He is a part of history even as he tears it apart and sets it apart from himself.[6]

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[6] The critical historian's participation in a chain of historicization that he cannot escape is the focus of de Man's analysis of modernism as a form of simultaneous blindness and insight in "Literary History and Literary Modernity." The critical historian's gesture of revaluation, de Man notes, is always itself a historical act, like the imperative of modernism to posit the present as a new place of origin that has broken decisively from the past. "As soon as modernism becomes conscious of its own strategies," he writes, "it discovers itself to be a generative power that not only engenders history, but is part of a generative scheme that extends far back into the past. [. . .] Considered as a principle of life, modernity becomes a principle of origination and turns at once into a generative power that is itself historical" (150). De Man concludes that "the rejection of the past is not so much an act of forgetting as an act of critical judgment" that the historian directs against himself as he becomes conscious of his own method (149).

Such a historian is obliged to become, as Spivak says of Nietzsche himself, "a philosopher of the 'sous rature'" (xxxiv). "'Knowing' that there is nowhere an isolatable unit, [. . .] and that conceptions of a unified present are merely an interpretation," she writes, "the philosopher, by an act of 'forgetting' that knowledge, wins himself a 'present'" (xxxii). This process of knowledge and oblivion allows him to speak with conviction while at the same time doubting the possibility of the stable truth or morality that would justify such a position. "Sustaining [. . .] the incoherence," Spivak adds, "mak[ing] the two poles in a curious way interdependent--that is Nietzsche's superb trick" (xxxii). His knowledge is deleted and left legible at the same time. It goes under erasure, but a trace of it remains to haunt the present from which he speaks (xxxii), just as, in the exteriorizing memory of impossible mourning, the knowledge of the other as other (or, for this critical historian, the past as other) haunts the preserving present of an interiorization through which the willfully ignorant subject gathers its memories into itself.

In "Nietzsche, Genealogy, History," Foucault revises Nietzsche's historical sense by emphasizing its shattering power. He understands it as an enabling "counter-memory" (160), as "the kind of dissociating view that is capable of decomposing itself, capable of shattering the unity of man's being through which it was thought he could extend his sovereignty to the events of the past" (153). At the origin of things, it discovers not their essence but the construction of essence; not a place of presence, but "a place of inevitable loss" (143); not "a forgotten identity, eager to be reborn, but a complex system of distinct and multiple elements, unable to be mastered by the powers of synthesis" (161).

Recognizing that the meaning of history is made by a series of discontinuous revaluations, by an "endlessly repeated play of dominations" (150), the historical sense promotes the emergence of new valuations, new "seizures" and redirections of the discursive rules and narrative formations that violently determine historical fact (151). This essay describes an approach more distinctly opposed to the unhistorical than Nietzsche suggests. Foucault's focus here on the idea that "knowledge [. . .] is made for cutting" (154) implies that the wound is left open. For Nietzsche, the knife that cuts also cauterizes. He refuses to decide between incisive awareness and healing oblivion, and offers them instead as inseparable aspects of the same process, each unsustainable in the absence of the other, each becoming the other.

This inseparability is accentuated in the *Genealogy*, where Nietzsche's description of memory is placed in the same context as the sovereign promise, and becomes subject to the same internal contradictions. Introducing his description of the way in which responsibility is bred through mnemotechnics, he explains that the will to remember appears "in those cases where promises are made." It is a form of indigestion, in contrast to the digestive faculty of those who forget. As a promise, however, it is also an affirmation of endurance, identity, and self-containment. Memory "involves no mere passive inability to rid oneself of an impression, no mere indigestion through a once-pledged word with which one cannot 'have done,' but an active *desire* not to rid oneself, a desire for the continuance of something desired once, a real *memory of the will*" (2.1). It is a memory that wills its own forgetting. This desire for a "long chain of will" to perpetuate itself is, after all, the same as the sovereign's desire to "stand security for *his* *own future*" by exercising "the *right to make promises*" (2.2). And as I have suggested in the previous chapters, this promise to be able to recall oneself requires momentarily blinding oneself to the fact that one is lying, that one will never remain identical. Remembering, then, is at once "an opposing faculty" to the life-preserving force of active forgetfulness (*Genealogy* 2.1; "Uses" 76) and an act of forgetfulness itself.

Read in this context, the critical historian inhabits the aporia that plagues what Michel de Certeau calls "the writing of history," a supplementary process set in motion by the desire to recover an absence at the origin. For de Certeau, as for Nietzsche and Foucault, this recovery work is performed at a site of construction where the past is both hammered apart and hammered together. The "labor of historiography" is a work of mourning, and its job (for which it is paid a return of complete comprehension) is to select and classify the "raw material" of the past in order to produce "the coherences 'sanctioned' by a period, [. . .] received coherences implied by what can be 'percieved' or 'thought' in a given time, the cultural systems that might provide the basis for periodization or temporal distinction" (28). Such coherences are based on the assumption that a state of presence lies "before" the labour of interpretation. Historiography, that is, seeks to settle on the presence of the past in the future. Its final account will be found at the end of the progressive "Hegelian" history that Nietzsche criticizes for its tendency to neutralize the possibilities of the past into a single universalizing and anthropomorphic narrative. This kind of history, Nietzsche writes, considers the human subject and the present age to be "the true meaning and goal of all previous events," and equates this subject's "miserable condition" with "a completion of world-history" ("Uses" 104). It is history conceived as what Derrida calls “a detour between two presences,” history “oriented toward the appropriation of truth in presence and self-presence, toward knowledge in consciousness-of-self” (“Structure” 291).

What both Nietzsche and Derrida criticize here is the understanding of Hegelian history as a method that makes sense of the apparently arbitrary events of the past, grasping them retrospectively as intelligible, necessary and purposeful stages of an overall pattern that has led to a moment of full temporal awareness and self-reflection. The ideal goal of such a process would be to arrive at a place of absolute knowledge from where the structure and purpose of one’s history can be fully understood. As Christopher Norris explains in his analysis of Derrida’s response to Hegel, such an approach aims to narrate history “from the viewpoint of Absolute Reason, of a consciousness that can now look back and retrace the progress of its own triumphal evolution.” “This progress,” he adds, “is marked by an increasing power of reflexive self-understanding, so that Reason finally arrives at a point where its entire past history becomes ideally intelligible in the light of present knowledge” (69-70). In an embrace like that with which the living encompass the dead, each present moment on the path that passes on toward absolute knowledge would, in this view, gather into itself the track, and the trace, of what has already “passed on.” Negated and preserved, the past would be contained within a widening spiral of self-development and self-consciousness that lets no event escape or go to waste. Referring to what Derrida has described as “the Hegelian discourse on the end of history in absolute knowledge” (Derrida, *Specters* 38), Hamilton suggests that such a discourse finally privileges a philosophical, rational historical method whose goal is to arrive at a condition of presence that supersedes the past (Hamilton 50). To achieve such an "absolute perspective from which everything is at last seen in its right place"--such a finally adequate and unchanging comprehension of the past in which the concepts of freedom and reason are realized as essential human goals--would be to arrive at the end of history (Hamilton 50).

The writing of history as mourning falls short of this goal. Rather than rendering the past intelligible, it is troubled by traces of the past that violate such a drive toward closure. Nietzsche describes this violation as a weakening of the "prison walls" of faith in language's ability to capture self-evident truths. The free intellect smashes this "enormous framework" where received truths are hoarded ("On Truth" 184); it "throws [them] into confusion, and then puts [them] together ironically, pairing the strangest, separating the nearest items" (190). It renders the ideally self-sustaining borders of intelligibility as provisional, that is, as the walls of the "enormous prison" that the Unnamable finally thinks into existence as the last possible place in which to discover himself: "Enormous prison, [. . .] from this time forth, and in it, somewhere, perhaps, riveted, tiny, the prisoner." For the Unnamable, too, it is a prison no sooner constructed than thrown into confusion. "How can he be found," he adds after only the space of a comma that hinges two contradictory gestures together, "how false this space is, what falseness instantly, to want to draw that round you, to want to put a being there" (569-70).

Recognized as a project not of returning to oneself in a circular detour whose end is its origin, but of becoming-through-time in a non-linear project of endlessly fractured paths, divergences, broken promises, and investment accounts that fail to secure a reward of absolute knowledge, a capitalized and capitalizing History also shatters the prison (or H-Block) that it builds for the past. As every present moment of historical containment itself recedes immediately into the past, the lines drawn around past experience need to be obsessively and repeatedly reinscribed. As de Certeau reminds us, while calling to mind the critical historian's inescapably historical gesture of standing outside history, these are lines not only of containment but of separation. "History," he writes, "is played along the margins which join a society with its past and with the very act of separating itself from that past. It takes place along those lines which trace the figure of a current time by dividing it from its other, but which the return of the past is continually modifying or blurring" (36-38). If for de Certeau the present is established in relation to a past that it aims willingly to exclude from itself, it is also established in relation to what is unwillingly excluded--in relation to the irrecoverable otherness of those events it has aimed to contain. The ultimately irrecoverable event is the lost origin from which all historical accounts proceed and which they presuppose as a foundation or reference point around which to orient the present (90-91). The discourse of history, writes de Certeau, "presupposes a *lost* object"; it "fashions out of language the forever-remnant trace of a beginning that is as impossible to recover as to forget" (47). "Expulsed from knowlege," the unrepresentable origin is "a ghost [that] insinuates itself into historiography and determines its organization: it is what we do not know, what is not endowed with a proper name" (91). Determining the shape of discourse, but always undeterminable within it, this ghost resists the aim of writing to play the role of "a burial rite," to "[exorcise] death by inserting it into discourse," and to bury the dead "as a way of establishing a place for the living" (100). It renders such a burial writing an always inadequate effort that writes its own failure into its performance: "as a substitute for the absent being, an enclosure of the evil genius of death, the historical text plays a performative role" (101). As a performative, it constitutes the present in relation to an unnamable past that both allows for and threatens its existence.

This endless process of inscribing lines around ghosts who walk through them describes, as Derrida puts it, "not history in the sense given to it by Levinas (totality)," but rather "the history of the departures from totality, history as the very movement of transcendence, of the excess over the totality without which no totality would appear as such" ("Violence" 117). The writing of history begins with this always-excessive trace of the other that is, for Derrida, the "arche-phenomenon of 'memory'" in the sense that it "opens the field of history--of historical becoming" (*Grammatology* 27). It is the "origin of the experience of space and time" (66) because it is the mark of an absence behind the structures of difference and deferral that allow us to conceive of spatial and temporal presence. As Young explains, "it is only through difference, by which the same becomes other and produces a tissue of differences, that history could ever take place: for if full presence were possible, then there would be no difference, and therefore no time, space--or history." Difference sets history in motion by prompting the thought of totalization while simultaneously sacrificing its realization: "if difference in the sense of non-identity sets up the possibility of history, then difference in its sense of delay means also that [history] can never be finally concluded, for such deferral will always inhibit closure" (Young 65).

4. Rumination

These theories of a history where the disseminative violence of the trace both prompts and opposes the totalizing violence of a complete account offer a way to describe a conflict at Long Kesh / The Maze in which reiterations of history and violence persistently prevent the protest from being reduced to a story of winners and losers, or progression and regression. The resistance of the hunger strike to such reductive narratives turns not only Feldman's sacrificial history, but also those of official and unofficial republican commemorations, into incomplete works of mourning. A brief passage from Feldman on what he calls the "unassimilated aspect of the prison protest" reinforces this connection. "Despite the rhetorical incorporation of the prison struggle into established Republican frameworks," he writes,

> the veterans of the H-Blocks confess to an unreconcilable sense of being alien, of inhabiting places and situations that cannot be fully comprehended by the nonprisoner [. . .]. This incomprehension is encountered in the painful silences that surround the events of the Hunger Strike, the silence of unhealed wounds, unresolved hopes, and fragmentary understanding. (164)

Fragmentary understanding by republican mourners is articulated by Bernadette Devlin McAliskey in her foreword to the 1994 account of the protests written by prisoners involved, *Nor Meekly Serve My Time*. "No deaths have been harder for me to come to terms with than the deaths of the hunger strikers," she writes. "Even now, 12 years later, I hold that period at arm's length. I don't want to address the question of why. Perhaps the enormity of the sacrifice is too great to weigh against the human frailty of those of us who remain" (xiii). She goes on to cite the phrase from Saint John's gospel that Sands used to defend his resolve in the face of entreaties from Father Denis Faul (O'Malley 109), and which is reinscribed on the tombstone of his fellow hunger striker, Kevin Lynch: "'A man can have no greater love than to lay down his life for his friends'" (Beresford 424). Speaking of this love, she admits, "I am in awe and perhaps fear of it. [. . .] Maybe I'm not sure how to deal with that degree of love. Maybe I wonder why they died for us, and we didn't die for them" (xiv). The way in which incomplete understanding perpetuates the need for repeated inscription is emphasized by the fact that her phrasing repeats not only Saint John and Bobby Sands, but also a tradition of similar questions reaching back from newspaper editorials like that of the *Irish Times* on 3 August 1981 describing the "needless" deaths of the strikers ("Dead") to the opening of *Gaol History* ("Was the hunger strike worth it?") to Yeats's famous concern about the martyrs of 1916: "Was it needless death after all?" ("Easter 1916," *Collected* 204). Her mixture of awe and confusion in response to the strikers' discomforting "degree of love" both repeats Yeats's rephrasing of his own question in the same poem and identifies with the psychological state he suggests may have been experienced by those about whom it is asked: "And what if excess of love / Bewildered them till they died?" Yeats, in turn, was repeating the words of a precursor, Pearse, who in turn was repeating the words of his precursor, Saint Colmcille, on the excess of love. In "The Murder Machine," an essay on education, Pearse writes:

> The old Irish system, pagan and Christian, possessed in pre-eminent degree the thing most needful in education: an adequate inspiration. Colmcille suggested

> what that inspiration was when he said, 'If I die it shall be from the excess of love that I bear the Gael.' A love and a service so excessive as to annihilate all thought of self, a recognition that one must give all, must be willing always to make the ultimate sacrifice--this is the inspiration alike of the story of Cuchulainn and of the story of Colmcille. (*Political* 25)

Traced by this series of previous citations, McAliskey's phrases make her one of those mourners who unavoidably add the strikers of 1981 to the lists of martyrs recited already by Sands. She becomes a mourner whose present account of the strike is distanced from itself through ties to past accounts, the presence of which is in turn articulated through ties to the past. In her brief narrative, the excessive love and self-annihilation of the H-Block martyrs seems, accordingly, to require statements that unsettle the strength of the self that mourns them. Rather than drawing the memory into herself, she keeps that period "at arms length"--attached, yet at a distance.

McAliskey's feeling of being too frail to contain the memory of the strikes also appeared in descriptions of interminable grief by the hunger strikers' families when they were interviewed by O'Malley in 1990. At the eighteenth Bobby Sands Memorial Lecture in Belfast, Sinn Féin's Martin Ferris insisted that while Sands symbolized the "collective image" of all the strikers, it was crucial to remember that "all those who were on the hunger strike and all of their families and friends endured the same pain, the same suffering and the same grief" (qtd. in *An Phoblacht*, 6 May 1999). O'Malley also describes the families' grief as expressions of sameness, but he begins by attributing this sameness to the restrictive republican framework into which they felt obliged to fit their memories. The result of this Procrustean procedure, he argues, is that the families share a condition of incomplete mourning which is masked unconvincingly by a consoling illusion of national pride--an illusion that subsumes the autonomy of individuals into the promise of an autonomous Ireland. To provide themselves with "a context that made sense of the madness," most of the family members he interviewed had decided to accept the most common republican account of the strike: that their sons had been victorious and had died to free Ireland (263). But O'Malley hears this as a forced and uneasy acceptance, epitomized by the statements of Margaret Devine, who underwent therapy to "learn to get over" her grief for her husband, Micky Devine. "I learnt a lot," she told O'Malley, "I learned that he died for his country, that he had to die for his beliefs" (qtd. 279). She learned that she now needed to "grieve properly," to "let Micky's love go" (qtd. 281). And she tried to teach her children the same lessons: "I tried to pump it into their heads but as they got older Michael thinks that his father was no big hero. [. . .] I still try to pump into into his head that 'Your Daddy died for Ireland, he was that dedicated to the cause. You should be very proud of your father'" (qtd. 280). Martin Hurson's neices and nephews had taken more readily to such instruction, learning to repeat "in unison" that Hurson died to free Ireland (273), but their mother's conviction was less clear: "They gave everything they had," she said, "So they must have proved something" (qtd. 271). Peggy O'Hara (Patsy O'Hara's mother) was similarly unconvinced, telling O'Malley that "not very much" came out of the hunger strikes, except perhaps for the genuine friendships she had formed while grieving, which showed that after all "the young fellows have achieved something" (qtd. 274-75). While Peggy

O'Hara explained that her family "talk about Patsy as if he's there" (qtd. 275), other families sensed that the strikers were still with them but were unable to put it into words for each other. Joe O'Donnell's sister Maureen admitted that her family was unable to talk to those of the other strikers, that the strike had "ruined the family" and scarred them with a sense of guilt, to the point where she was certain they would "never get over [their] grief" (qtd. 265). "It is all hushed up," his mother added, "We don't explore anything here, we keep it all to ourselves" (qtd. 263). His sister, Eilis, concurred: "I've never talked to anyone about my grief." After his death, she admitted, "I didn't really speak much about it," and instead spent many nights "getting down on my knees and screaming, but nothing came out" (qtd. 265). Thomas McElwee's brothers were similarly speechless after the death, according to their mother: "the brothers were just speechless. They just closed up, kept it bottled up inside them" (qtd. 277).

Along with the speechlessness, O'Malley found "an unwavering conviction that the dead hunger strikers were still with them, living presences with whom they communicated" (263). This "almost pervasive fixation," he continues, "that the hunger strikers were still with them--an existential denial that the hunger strikers were dead--ensured that the claims of the past would continue to outweigh the possibilities of the future" (282). The most common response of the families has been to "make sense of it all" through appeals to "the mythic past" (283), to encompass them within a history that interprets them as soldiers fighting "'as an expression of their Irishness.'" Echoing Nietzsche's metaphor of the assimilative horizon drawn by the unhistorical subject, he concludes that their families' aim was to ensure that their sons "were folded into the embrace of the eight-hundred-year struggle against the English" (283). But the borders of the embrace are unconvincing. The dead, he suggests, were still being held at arm's length. The families were trapped in "a grief they could not come to terms with and at the same time cannot let go of" (265).

The process of coming to terms is crucial for O'Malley. He suggests that this process would benefit the families by replacing their fixation on a selective history that prevents a complete work of mourning:

> For the hunger strikers' families the hunger strikes are fixed in time, every detail either recounted with total recall as though the events took place only yesterday or entirely blocked out. Some memories are too painful to recall. They have attached themselves to their dead sons and brothers, arresting the mourning process, leaving in its place unresolved grief, implacable pain. [. . .] Everything is incomplete. (262)

O'Malley's characterization of arrested mourning (a state of incompletion and speechlessness in which one remains attached to the dead while disavowing their loss) corresponds closely to the melancholia described by Abraham and Torok in their effort to separate it clearly from the concept of mourning. O'Malley's description of families fixated on the belief that the dead still live corresponds to the melancholic's incorporation of the lost object in a crypt while failing to acknowledge its death. For Abraham and Torok, unexpressed grief leads to the formation of a "*secret vault*" (8) in which the living dead are reconstituted in memory and retained within the mourning subject. The imprisoned protestors, to rephrase O'Malley's view in this context, are imprisoned for a second time in their families' memories, for incorporation and encryption is a "sealing off," an "imprisonment," an "interment" that is also an interminable mourning (Abraham and Torok 10, 14).

For O'Malley, the solution to such an interminable interment would be to dispel, in the style of the critical historian, the illusion of wholeness and presence which only perpetuates the failure to properly mourn. Yet while he rightly interrogates the illusory context that they both cling to and admit is inadequate, O'Malley retreats from this kind of critical insight when he replaces one myth of presence with another. In place of the myth of national unity that he believes only perpetuates what McAliskey calls the "frailty of those of us who remain," he counsels individual unity. Autonomy and completion is to be gained, he suggests, by coming to terms with and letting go of "the claims of the past." While Freud, de Certeau and Derrida have all treated words as inadequate and ambivalent devices for covering over a loss--devices that both replace a lost object and draw attention to its absence--O'Malley has more faith in the possibility of achieving independence, or discovering oneself, through language. While for O'Malley the writing of the book is itself a journey of self-discovery, he argues that the families' sons were denied such a journey. Theirs "were not the actions of autonomous individuals," but acts of replication, appropriation, and identification with the figures of a republican model of history. "Part of the imaginary process itself" (116), their performances built mythologized "self-images" which "impaired their ability to act independently" (117). Their justification of their actions through appeals to a "duty" to Ireland and a "consciousness of Irish identity" that the hunger striker Raymond McCreesh claimed was "holding [him] together" (qtd.

116) are dismissed as "ritualistic, reflexive intonations of nineteenth-century Republican cant," as "narcissistic assertions of a nobility of purpose that puts belief in vague abstractions above belief in life itself" (116).

O'Malley's replacement of one myth with another is, in a simplified sense, a process of remembering and forgetting--an example of the "drive to construct" which must, for Nietzsche, accompany the desire to annihilate and destroy. His reconstruction, however, seems to lack the awareness of simultaneous self-creation and self-defeat that the critical historian possesses. It avoids acknowledging that his new house, built on the land cleared of a previous historical construct, is itself susceptible to revaluation. What O'Malley does not accept is the collapsing of appearance and reality offered by the critical historian. The illusions they cling to and the words they appropriate are "of course," he writes, "quite meaningless in a literal sense, and unconnected to the realities of modern-day Ireland" (116). What the continuing repetition of martyrological rhetoric in Irish politics shows, however, is that those illusions create both the meaning and the reality of modern-day Ireland. They establish the historical positions necessary for the perpetuation of sectarian violence and resentment. "Vague abstractions" about "Irish identity" are not above or below "life itself" in Northern Ireland, but inseparable from it. They are terms that can determine not only the sense of identity but also the behaviour of the nation's citizens, from their attendance at commemorations to their restricted movement in and around the codified spaces of cities like Derry and Belfast. O'Malley usefully challenges the legitimacy of those abstractions, but in dismissing their effects he does not allow for the concrete reiterative possibilities behind acts of appropriation, possibilities like those offered by Feldman. For O'Malley, the strikers' families will repeat history until they properly mourn it. As I have suggested above, the perspective of critical history reverses this logic. It implies instead that proper mourning, if it were possible, would not resist repetition but produce it. Such reproduction, however, could occur only if the meanings of the words and acts that the strikers appropriate were rendered somehow identical to their first utterance, carried uncorrupted from one generation to another, and tethered to the context from which they were taken. Simple repetition, that is, would be realized only if the context of grievance and resistance was configured identically in both today's and yesterday's Ireland. Resisting this concept of historical repetition, as Derrida does in "Signature Event Context," Foucault points out in his reading of Gilles Deleuze that the "eternal return" in the form of a self-perpetuating circle was, for Nietzsche, an "intolerable thought." What Deleuze offers instead, he explains, is a theory of "the recurrence of difference, [. . .] repetition giving voice to difference" in such a way that "the analogous, the similar, and the identical never return" ("Theatricum" 194-95). The turn of the sting of knowledge against itself is arguably as close to and far from return as Nietzsche is able to go.

Even as it appears to replace one model of complete mourning with another, O'Malley's knowledge does return to this scene of reconstruction. Although he finds it easier to come to terms than McAliskey does, he nevertheless makes gestures of resistance to his own effort to draw conclusions. "There are no grand conclusions to be drawn," he concludes, "no prescriptions or solutions to offer. I believe the conflict will last at least another twenty or thirty years, that the competing claims to legitimacy will never entirely resolve themselves" (287). Such an oscillation, though less sustained and complex in its terminology, calls us back to both Feldman's and Kearney's negotiations between containment and excess in their descriptions of politics in the North. The terms O'Malley comes to are at once full of promise and bound to fail. Like the terms that force Beckett's narrators to "go on," they are part of a hunger for history which shows that a melancholic inability to adequately symbolize a loss produces not silence but "insistent communicativeness" (Freud, "Mourning" 247). To fall silent, after all, as the Unnamable insists, is to arrive at a place where the self, and the past, has finally been said. The penultimate section of O'Malley's text describes his meeting with the vice-principal of Sands's former school and the understandable despondency they feel while looking at photographs of other pupils who have died in the violence since the strikes: "Twenty students in all, victims of either random assassination or bombing or deliberate intention. And we sit there in silence, the two of us, [. . .] the waste of it overwhelming. There is nothing left to say" (284). The book itself, as well as the following paragraph in which he speaks of the difficulty of arriving at conclusions on the subject that continues to tear Irish communities apart, shows that such a statement, while responding sensitively to the pain endured by those involved in the conflict, is necessarily as false as Malone's promise that "that is the end of me. I shall say I no more" (391),[7] or Molloy's prediction at the beginning of his narrative: "This time, then once more I think, then perhaps a last time, then I think it'll be over" (4).

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[7] Malone does, three times, in an effort to impose meaning on memory: "I remember, [. . .] I mean, [. . .] I mean" (397). Yet his promise is also "true" in the sense that his "I" is another in every subsequent moment of utterance.

In the same paragraph, Molloy appropriately follows this "premonition of the last but one but one" (5) with a description of rumination that echoes the opening paragraphs of Nietzsche's "Uses," in which the human who remembers things is rendered restless and envious of the animal able to completely forget. "Consider the cattle, grazing as they pass you by," Nietzsche writes, "They do not know what is meant by yesterday or today, they leap about, eat, rest, digest, leap about again, [. . .] fettered to the moment [. . .] and thus neither melancholy nor bored" (60). Molloy, too, "remembers things," but treats the animal's rumination as a metaphor for his own inability to stop bringing up tales from a history that seems (intermittently) to be his. As Nietzsche was later to do in his preface to the *Genealogy* where he promotes exegetical reading as an art of rumination (*Genealogy*, "Preface" 8), Molloy collapses the distinction between species by linking his endless invention to the "lying" and repetition that afflicts animals too:

> cows were chewing in enormous fields, lying and standing, in the evening silence. Perhaps I'm inventing a little, perhaps embellishing, but on the whole that's the way it was. They chew, swallow, then after a short pause effortlessly bring up the next mouthful. A neck muscle stirs and the jaws begin to grind again. But perhaps I'm remembering things. (5)

For Molloy, as for the critical historian, remembering always also involves forgetting, inventing, embellishing again on the ground liberated by memory. In a passage that characterizes the way in which his text crosses between images of containment and excess while alternately defending and criticizing both as they are realized at individual and national levels, O'Malley turns also to the imagery of rumination. Speaking of the increasingly worn rhetoric of the speakers at annual Bobby Sands commemorations and of the increasingly inaccurate memories of those new generations who attend but cannot recall Sands's first name, he writes: "In a paradoxical way there is too little memory in a country which prides itself on too much." "Militant Republicanism provides the martyrs for a culture that devours and forgets," he adds, "yet the appetite remains insatiable" (260). For O'Malley, the insatiable appetite perpetuates unproductive repetition. In the language of those theories that Irish commemorative rhetoric insistently reiterates, however, insatiability can also lead us to recognize this rhetoric in the affirmative sense where histories are sacrificed in the project of rumination, or ruination. Lost "among countless lost events, without a landmark or a point of reference" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 155), deprived of the ability to establish the dead as "a point of reference, a touchstone" (McGuinness, Introduction 2) or a "cornerstone for wider political development" (McFarlane, qtd. in "Remembering"), the critical historian of this nation of ruins finds himself, like the woman from *Ill Seen Ill Said*, in an "abode of stones" that cannot be gathered, for any more than a passing moment of revaluation, into the consoling abode of a national monument. The historian is rendered homeless in what Beckett has described elsewhere as a "ruinstrewn land" trodden by a figure who suffers from a "confusion of memory and lament" ("Fizzle 3," *Collected* 232-33)--a confusion, in this case, of memory and forgetting.

The inability to hold history's ruins at anything but a restless arm's length also works its way into those officially republican commemorations that simultaneously disavow and reveal an unaccountability in the strikers' acts. Adams unintentionally exemplifies many such efforts when, in his 1986 account of the recent conflict, he notes that "what the ten who died had done was so extraordinary that one almost needs another language in order to convey it in all its awful reality," and that he remains too close to his feelings about the deaths to "express those feelings adequately" or to "reflect upon them in tranquillity" (*Free* 71, 69). His 1996 autobiography, *Before the Dawn*, grafts many passages from the earlier book directly into its new context.[8] In both books, he alternately promotes and withdraws from his account of the strikes as a necessary part of continual progress by admitting at the same time that the party's electoral victories of that year were achieved "more by accident than by calculation" (*Before* 285), considering his view at the time that the strikes would not contribute to advancement but rather "hijack the struggle" (*Free* 67) and "divert attention and energy from the tasks of political development" (*Before* 285).

This undecided assessment is emphasized by disputes in the movement, particularly in the wake of the Good Friday Agreement, over who represents the hunger strikers' true legacy. Members of Sinn Féin imply (sometimes equivocally) that the strikers would have supported their current strategy (Owen Carron, qtd. in Maurice Kennedy, 7 May 2001; Bik McFarlane, qtd. in Cowen, 7 May 2001). Others--like Republican Sinn Féin and the 32-County Sovereignty Committee--accuse Sinn Féin of having "steadily perverted" Sands's ideals (Ruairí O'Brádaigh, qtd. in Breen, "Adams," 7

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[8] The political urgency of the passages is mitigated by their re-placement among novelistically stylized personal reflections ranging in tone from anger to wistfulness to comedy, and this contextual alteration is mirrored by the transformation of Adams' image from one book cover to the next: from a glaring and inquisitive activist standing in shirtsleeves before a poster of the Proclamation, to a suited statesman beaming serenely with accomplishment.

May 2001) and of manipulating their memory for electoral gains. At the 1997 Bobby Sands Commemoration in Belfast, three days after the 1 May British general election that brought Tony Blair to power and made Adams and McGuinness Westminster MPs for West Belfast and Mid-Ulster, Adams assured those assembled that Sinn Féin was as "totally united" as the republicans it represented. He was seconded by McGuinness, who added, "I can assure the families [that] everywhere we go we feel the power of the hunger strikers behind us" (qtd. in Robinson). The assurance, however, was offered in the knowledge that Sinn Féin was far from united on several issues: on ceasefire renewal (the IRA's 1994 ceasefire was soon to be restored on 20 July 1997); on holding talks with the British; on increasing the party's links to Westminster; and on allowing party members to take up seats in the proposed Assembly at Stormont. In December of the same year, with the memory of the hunger strikers also vividly behind them but signifying differently, republicans opposed to the peace process broke away to form the 32-County Sovereignty Committee (political wing of the Real IRA), an organization vice-chaired by Sands's sister, Bernadette Sands-McKevitt. In an interview for the *Irish Times* the following year, Sands-McKevitt indicated the position of her party on the decommissioning issue: "Peace is not what our people fought for, they fought for independence." They were entitled to achieve that objective, she added, "by whatever means are necessary" (qtd. in "Ruane," 9 May 1998). Her views are supported by figures like Marian Price, who, with her sister Dolours, was force-fed during their 200-day hunger strike in 1974 which gained them repatriation from Brixton to Armagh jail. Speaking on the anniversary of Sands's death, which in 2001 came a month prior to general elections, Price summarized the viewpoint of so-called dissident republicans who believe the strikers would "turn in their graves," as she put it, at the thought of Sinn Féin's decision to have Adams and McGuinness sit in the current Assembly at Stormont: "I don't see how the hunger strikers could have supported the Good Friday Agreement or gone along with what is being proposed as their legacy" (qtd. in Cowan, 7 May 2001).

These disputes over the rightful inheritance of the strikes point to the gaps and inconsistencies in genealogical understanding that trouble claims of unbroken continuity between the dead and the living. They reveal the disparity and contest of a "hazardous play" of dominations (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 148). In such a history, writes Foucault, the singularity of events cannot be dissolved into an "ideal continuity" (154). Instead, those events provide only "a dangerous legacy" when one understands "heritage" not as "an acquisition, a possession that grows and solidifies," but rather as "an unstable assemblage of faults, fissures, and heterogeneous layers that threaten the fragile inheritor from within or from underneath" (146). It is in this space of discontinuity and contest between competing valuations, "the space that divides them, the void through which they exchange their threatening gestures and speeches" (150), that new legacies may be traced.

The gesture toward such spaces has been made during recent republican commemorations. At the opening of a hunger strike memorial in Derry on 5 March 2000, for example, the Irish Republican Socialist Party's Willie Gallagher admitted, "We do not call on the dead to give assent from the grave," for "the truth is we do not know!, let no organisation claim the hunger strikers assent or dissent for a particular political strategy in the new millennium" (Gallagher, n.p.). Twenty years after the funeral oration in which he echoed Pearse by saying that Sands had "not died in vain" but had made "the supreme sacrifice" at the end of a life which amounted to "a cameo of the entire resistance movement" and a symbol of "the true Irish nation" (qtd. in "Thousands Attend," 8 May 1981), Owen Carron also admitted that he had "no ready answer" to the question of whether the strikers would approve of Sinn Féin's current strategy (Maurice Kennedy, 7 May 2001). Tommy McKearney, who participated in the 1980 hunger strike and opposed the Good Friday Agreement, agreed with Carron that it was "impossible to know" the answer to this question (qtd. in Breen, "Adams," 7 May 2001). Adams resisted the notion of incorruptible legacy and identification, too, during a 2001 Easter Rising Commemoration speech in Dublin, in which he asked republicans to put violence behind them by recognizing, "you do not have to emulate the men and women of 1916, you do not have to emulate the hunger strikers, you do not have to emulate the people who have died in our struggle" (qtd. in Watt).[9]

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[9] There is, however, an obvious irony in the fact that Adams introduced this advice with a direct emulation of his own. "You have to accept that you have a role to play in this struggle," he insisted immediately before delivering the lines quoted above, appropriating Sands's famous assertion that "everyone, Republican or otherwise, has his own particular part to play" in the struggle for national unity (Sands 225). Adams' call for an end to emulation is also inconsistent with his expression of a more conservative sentiment at the "same" Easter Rising Commemoration in Dublin the previous year (4 April 1999). In that speech, while criticizing the "revisionism and political cowardice" which had "erased the history, the deeds and the significance of 1916 from the official recognition of that event," he maintained that the actions of the 1916 martyrs still "set an example to all freedom-loving people and for our struggle." This kind of discrepancy is typical of Adams' carefully devised speeches, which frequently hang on what I have called the paradox of his commitment to change. At a 1997 Easter Commemoration speech at Belfast's Milltown Cemetery, for example, he spoke of the "national reconciliation" envisioned by the instigators of the Rising and confirmed that "our task is to turn this vision into a reality. To implement the proclamation of 1916." In the same speech he went on, however, to distance himself from such a direct identification: "The great challenge facing us all" is to "resolve the causes of conflict in a new and imaginative way, which isn't a repeat of past failures

Beyond the discontinuities exposed in the immediate contest over what Sands, in a description of haunted blanket protestors, calls "the legacies of ghosts gone by" (168), a more general separation of living from dead is evoked by reminders from all sides that the dead have not yet been assimilated into a national narrative of cornerstones and monuments. Such a project is put off because the unified 32-County nation assigned hopefully with completing this task does not yet exist--because the only "fitting monument" to the dead will be the ending of partition. Again, Gallagher (even while stressing his party's view that the Good Friday Agreement is "a political straitjacket" that perpetuates the "divisive, sectarian politics of the past" and "prolong[s] the suffering of the working class"), anticipated and concurred with the terms of Adams' sentiment while

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and which makes real progress" (Easter Address, 1997). Sands-McKevitt performed the same turns while discussing the 32-County Sovereignty Committee in a May 1998 interview with Medb Ruane. Her goal, she said, was "to keep the republican movement intact." Using a metaphor that recalled her brother's resolve, she dismissed decommissioning talks as a "ploy," "a system of drip-feeding" designed to reduce eventual resistance by familiarizing the republican electorate with the possibility of putting arms beyond use. She insisted that her party's "fundamental principles remain the same." Yet in response to the question of how she planned to assert her influence without engaging in the political process, she responded: "We've broken the mould so far, we've done a lot of things that are very unpredictable. We're trying not to make the mistakes of the past" (qtd. in Ruane). Similar contradictions are revealed in reiterations of Adams' famous statement, close to a year after the 1994 ceasefire, that the IRA "haven't gone away, you know" (qtd. in Bew and Gillespie 311). Adams himself first redirected the phrase at the 1997 Bobby Sands Commemoration by reminding the crowd that Major and Thatcher finally "have gone away, you know," while the republican presence had not gone anywhere (qtd. in O'Broin). But when Sands-McKevitt again redirected the phrase, this time appropriating it for her own group by warning that "we will keep working--we will not go away" (qtd. in Ruane), she emphasized the contradiction between remaining fundamentally faithful to the principles of the past and moving away from them. As the movement is taken further away from its centre through internal divisions, the insistence on its continuing presence becomes increasingly urgent. The reappropriation of the terms of such presence, however--a reiteration that takes the terms away from themselves and their original conditions of use--destabilizes the concept of "not going away" even as it is uttered.

commemorating the Irish National Liberation Army's hunger strikers O'Hara, Lynch, and Devine in March of the same year: "we could fill the graveyards of Ireland with fine monuments but if we do not continue to struggle for the socialist republic then those monuments will remain just lumps of granite. [. . .] Let the establishment of an Irish Socialist Republic stand as the finest ever monument to our fallen comrades!" (Gallagher, n.p.). Like the independent self assumed by the full work of mourning, this monumental history is only ever on the way to completion, because it can only be built by way of a bridge to the past whose aborted interiorization remains both a failure and an expression of respect for the irreducible alterity of the other. As I noted in the first chapter, the introjection of completed mourning would achieve severance from the lost object by overcoming and absorbing its otherness into the self, by declaring it dead and thus replacing the loss with words that cover over its absence. The incorporation of incomplete or arrested mourning (what Abraham and Torok define in "Introjection" as melancholia) fails to achieve such an interiorizing reduction of the other to the same because the loss remains disavowed; rather than being declared dead, the lost object is preserved inside the self as a psychic effect, splitting into a conflict between the ego and the superego. Between these conditions, the lost one resides in the crypt as a stranger, undigested, a living dead on an indeterminate threshold (Derrida, "Roundtable" 57-58). As Sands's writings suggest, the lost one is not only a stranger but a prisoner, a subject of internment and interment on the threshold of a nation that ruins itself as it oscillates, or trembles, between memory and forgetting in the project of historical rumination.

5. *Abandoned Works*

One of Sands's most frequent descriptions of himself in his prison writings is as one of "the living dead," or a "living corpse," imprisoned in a "tomb" and standing on "the threshold of another trembling world" (219).[10] He also insisted repeatedly in both his writing and conversations that he was, in effect, "already dead." "I wish I was dead," he concludes, after one of many descriptions of the brutal conditions of his internment, only to add, "'But I am dead,' I say aloud: I can't even kill myself, I think" (172). He offered what Feldman calls this "anticipatory dissemination of his death" (242) to fellow striker Pat McGeown, who recalled in conversation with O'Malley, "you got the impression you were talking to someone who was one step removed from life already" (qtd. in O'Malley 57). According to the recollection of another prisoner interviewed by Feldman, he also spoke of being already dead to his mother, responding to her question of whether the strike was going to "work" by stating simply, "'Just go out and make funeral arrangements. I'm dead'" (qtd. in Feldman 244). Sands recognized that his position was difficult to understand, and commented in a 'comm' to Gerry Adams on the need for his mourners to hold on to something even as it was slipping from their grasp: "People find this hard to grasp altho' I'm ensuring I give my family some hope to hold on to" (2 April 1981, qtd. in Beresford 108 and O'Malley 58). The dynamics of mourning and encryption, performed in both Sands's rhetoric and that of his mourners, suggest that these phrases may be revalued as statements that unsettle the sense of the nation for which Sands was willing to die. They prompt a reading of Sands as a lost one held on the trembling threshold of a nation that is unable to fully take hold of his memory and his sacrifice.

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[10] The image is made most explicit in phrases like the following: "I am a living corpse now" (43); "In the blackness I awoke like a corpse in the grave" (163); "I feel like a living corpse" (185); "I feel like a cripple, maybe even a corpse" (185); the prison guards "come before the sun / To count the living dead" (141) in their "tombs of misery" where they journey "endlessly in an endless time" (181); Sands's fellow prisoners resemble "'dead men'" savaged and left lifeless on the "filthy, stinking floor of ready-made tombs" (194), "vile tomb[s]," "lonely tomb[s]" (166).

The hunger strikers' Irish mourners, however, are not alone in encrypting their lost ones. Britain did so as well, because it had arguably lost them already as it held them both dead and alive in the H-Blocks. Ireland's encryptions, that is, were mirrored in advance by the British during the protest itself--a protest during which, as critics like Feldman, Aretxaga, and Maud Ellman have suggested, the prisoners' disruptive and mimetic resistance threatened the colonial state's sense of itself. These critics argue, in various terms, that the protesters not only refused to digest the state's discourse, but refused to be digested by it. This argument supports Sands's implication that he refuses either to eat or be eaten by the "monster" of the state. "I fought a monster today and once more I defeated the monster's army," he writes of his inassimilability. "I know that I am what I am, no matter what may be inflicted upon me, it will never change that fact. [. . .] When I resist, it doesn't understand. [. . .] But my spirit prevails. [. . .] This angers the monster. It goes mad. It brutalises me to the point of death. But it does not kill me" (159). At the same time as he resists the assimilative system of the "lonely tomb" which has the power to make him doubt his assertive "I am" to the point of claiming, "I feel as if I am buried without an existence" (166), he also repeatedly describes his own system's constitutional rejection of the "screws" (prison guards) whose influence is no sooner ingested than brought up again. Just as the screws are physically repulsed by the prisoners' living conditions during the dirty protest, Sands is "disgusted" in turn by the guards' food (29, 67) and by their treatment of prisoners. Responding to a guard's effort to convince him to clothe himself and so receive the privilege of parcels from outside, he writes, "Jesus! I felt like vomiting" (32), and he envisages an expression of the same disgust on the gravestone of another recently deceased guard: "So bury him and let him lie / . . . / But write above his marble stone / 'Here lies a stinking Screw,' / For if men knew what he had done / They'd turn their backs and spew" (136). He is "sickened" both metaphorically, by his experience of physical and psychological torture at the hands of the guards ("How can you win, I thought, and felt like vomiting as they dragged me back to my cell again" [50]) and literally, by the toxic disinfectant they use to hose down the cells, creating fumes which "cut at the eyes and throat, bringing on fits of vomiting and temporary blindness" (77).

This exchange of ingestion and rejection between hunger striker and state is a dangerously reversible dynamic in more than one sense. It is a dynamic through which the Irish displace the authority not only of the British state, but also of the republic claimed by their precursors. Aretxaga's and Ellman's psychoanalytic readings of the prisoners' inassimilability offer a useful introduction to this argument. Aretxaga emphasizes an "emotional dynamic" that she thinks Feldman misses in his focus on instrumentalized bodies as "artifacts" manipulated by the political technologies of prisoners and guards. Analyzing both feces and menstrual blood "not as artifacts but as overdetermined primordial symbols" (125), she sees them as symbolic expressions, "compromise formations," or Freudian "symptoms" of deep hatred and anger that "could not be expressed in other forms without risking madness or serious physical injury" (131-32). She sees the protest as "simultaneously a sign of rejection and an instrument of power" which confronts the British with "a return of a repressed history" of Anglo-Irish relations and prison violence (131-33). The protestors appropriated, literalized, and materialized familiar colonial "fantasies of savagery projected onto Catholics" and "confronted the officers in an inescapable physical form with their own aggressive fantasies." Feeling defiled and repulsed by this materialization of the primitivized "savage and dirty" Irish stereotype, the guards ironically stepped up their own savagery and violence in an effort to erase the image. In the process, they became indistinguishable from the uncivilized menace that they were unable to contain (136).

Aretxaga points here to a place where what Foucault theorizes as subject-formation (or "subjection") through the disciplinary measures of discursive and material violence breaks down. The "technology of normalization" fails to produce "'docile' bodies" (Foucault, *Discipline* 138) when, as in the case of the dirty protest, the prisoners "refuse to be normalized" and prompt the authorities to react with excessive forms of punishment that betray their ostensibly rational and civilizing aims (Aretxaga 124). Aretxaga argues that this refusal was particularly marked in the concurrent dirty protest in Armagh women's prison. She suggests that, in spite of what she reads as the women's aim to make themselves politically visible by erasing the gender difference between themselves and the male prisoners at the Maze, the fact that their dirty protest was "tainted with menstrual blood" (137) as well as excrement inevitably reinscribed the discourse of gender and sexual difference into the political field. It brought into the foreground "a different kind of suffering, one systematically obscured" in constructions of social space, Catholicism, and nationalist ideology in Ireland (140). In addition to the "interconnected domains of prison violence, colonial history, [and] unconscious motivation (infantile fantasies, fears, and desires)," this symbol of sexual difference contributed to the overdetermination of the protest, the shifting of its meanings, and its protean quality which endowed it with a subversively shocking and continually incomprehensible force. It demonstrated that "the meanings of the Dirty Protest were not fixed, but shifted with each domain of experience into which they tapped, acting simultaneously as weapon, symbol, and symptom" (144). It also had the social effect of forcing discussion "among Nationalists and feminists alike on the exclusionary politics of the very categories of feminism and nationalism" (143). With Feldman and O'Malley, Aretxaga concludes in this article that "the men's Dirty Protest was locked in its own violence," in "a political impasse characterized by a vicious cycle of projection-reflection" (137). Without aiming to reduce the differences described in her analysis, my own argument suggests that what she sees as the transformative and subversive capabilities in the women's dirty protest--a reiterative shifting of contexts--can be recognized also in the Maze Prison hunger strikes, particularly when her theories are combined with an analysis of the strikers' performances of historical reiteration.

Ellman's reading includes a turn toward encryption that bridges the gap between Aretxaga's approach and my treatment of the protest's shifting and enablingly self-defeating contexts of revolt. The strikers, she argues, disrupted the prison's effort to contain them within a "civilizing" narrative of rehabilitation that draws a clear boundary between lawful and unlawful behaviour. Through the physical excesses of the dirty protest, they symbolically returned to the uncivilized state of the infant whose sense of its bodily boundaries is not yet self-contained or acculturated: "defying their containment with incontinence," they rejected "the most primal signs of cultural inscription," the "notion of the self [. . .] founded on the regulation of the orifices" (105). As Freud writes in "Negation," this subject distinguishes its inside from its outside by introjecting what it wants to identify with and rejecting, or "spit[ting] out," that which it judges to be "alien to the ego," apart from the self ("Negation" 237, qtd. in Ellman 39). Earlier in the same book, Ellman draws the connection between this model of ego-formation and Abraham and Torok's "encryptment." Turning to Freud's suggestion that the ego's character is a precipitate of abandoned object choices, she notes that the self whose borders are established through a series of cannibalistic ingestions and rejections "is composed of the remains of all the other selves it has devoured" (40). Following Abraham and Torok, she then likens encryptment to Freud's account of the incorporations of the melancholic who, in refusing to acknowledge the death of the lost object, allows it to "feed upon the living ego" (41) until the latter is, as Freud puts it, "totally impoverished" ("Mourning" 253). The ego becomes a crypt, "haunted by the victims of its own devouring love" which can eventually overwhelm it (Ellman 41; see also Freud, "Mourning" 252). Her analysis of ingestion and rejection then shifts to a political context where, with Feldman and Aretxaga, she acknowledges that the strikes represented in part a rejection of "any input from the colonizer" (88). She suggests that "by spurning food, they refuse[d] to be influenced by the authorities or to swallow the values that their captors [were] ramming down their throats" (93). In spite of her turn to encryption, however, and her recognition that "starving also keeps the other in and fortifies the stronghold of the ego" (95), Ellman's focus on the subversive implications of hunger-striking as a rejection of "any influx from the outer world" (93), rather than an appropriation of it, prevents her from developing a reading of the subversive potential of incorporation.

I have suggested that by refusing to either digest or be digested by the state, the strikers perform two strategies of resistance simultaneously, both encrypting the state and obliging the state to encrypt them. For the prisoners who incorporate and restage the "subjecting" mechanics of British authority, encryption amounts to what Bhabha redefines as a Freudian topology of "melancholic revolt," a strategy of resistance through mimicry, reappropriation and displacement. As their authority is reiterated elsewhere, the British are rendered other to themselves, familiar yet unrecognizable. The H-Block conflict demonstrates, however, that encryption can also be read as a reversible dynamic of revolt. It is reversible, first of all, in the sense that in the mirror of mimicry one recognizes not only oneself in the other, but the other in oneself. While the British do not perform encryption as a revolt against authority as the prisoners do, they nevertheless undermine Irishness in this exchange by dividing it from itself. As they resist the British by incorporating them, the strikers are obliged to recognize that they too are inhabited by the trace of the other that they cannot afford to be rid of. In this view, the mirror brings observers from both sides face to face with the now-familiar proposition that both Irish and British identity are the inescapable conditions of possibility, and impossibility, of one another's emergence. What the mourning of the hunger strikes demonstrates more clearly, however, is a different aspect of reversibility. Rather than emphasizing the way in which dyspeptic encryption is a mutual condition turned over from one side to the other, it shows how the strategy is turned by one side against itself. Like the knife of the critical historian, melancholic revolt against the British state arguably turns on those who employ it precisely because their authority for doing so is sought through appeal to their own state. The hunger strikers take on not only the British but also their own precursors, who subject the strikers to the same disconcerting obligation to encrypt as that to which the strikers have subjected the British. The authority of the strikers' precursors, then, is displaced even as it is counted on to provide a monumentalizing touchstone for both the protest and the nation in whose name it is undertaken.

The concept of melancholic revolt can be approached through the suggestion, outlined in my reading of Freud in Chapter One, that the melancholic subject sets up an ambivalent relationship of identification as an internal psychic conflict where the desire to preserve and destroy the lost object, or to maintain and sever one's ties to it, coincide. One's love for the object "escapes extinction" ("Mourning" 257) through this process whereby the aggression that would otherwise be externalized against the object is internalized as self-punishment. This self-punishment is also an expression of guilt that creates conscience. As in the Oedipal phase of identification, the ego punishes itself for the aggression it felt toward the other by changing places with it. In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud summarizes this dynamic as one in which the ego suppresses its aggression, and internalizes the power of an other as a figure of authority that it does not dare to attack in reality, by entering into the position it would originally have liked the other to occupy. In turn, it allows the other to take the position of the critical agency and to take possession of its anger. It "turns the aggressiveness inwards and hands it over to the super-ego" (*Civilization* 77 fn), as one might hand over a weapon. "The effect of instinctual renunciation on the conscience," Freud explains, "is that every piece of aggression whose satisfaction the subject gives up is taken over by the super-ego and increases the latter's aggressiveness (against the ego)." "By means of identification," the child "takes the unattackable authority into himself. The authority now turns into his super-ego and enters into possession of all the aggressiveness which a child would have liked to exercise against it" (76).

But this appropriation of the other in the form of the authority to which one hands over one's arms is always, also, a strategy of holding the other at arm's length. As the other is displaced, it is challenged, or degraded, as Freud goes on to point out: "The child's ego has to content itself with the unhappy role of the authority--the father--who has been thus degraded. Here, as so often, the [real] situation is reversed: 'If I were the father and you were the child, I should treat you badly'" (*Civilization* 76). The ego "becomes" the other, splitting into two and so in effect "playing" the other as both a victim (the ego "altered by identification" ["Mourning" 249]) and a persecutor (the part of the ego held apart from itself as it "split[s] off" and is "differentiated out of the ego" to become the superego ["Mourning" 247; *Group* 42]). The setting up of this psychic topography of self-punishment is a performance that resists authority indirectly by redirecting the original conflict into a different context. Such a recontextualization resists not through opposition but through mimicry, as the hunger strikers did when, by replaying and making visible the scene of colonial violence on their bodies, they presented the state with a picture of its own barbarity, shifting its violence from a position of normalization and naturalization to a place where it became defamiliarized and deprived of its self-legitimating context.

Bhabha emphasizes the subversive power of such a shift where authority is displaced from itself, where its position of presence and methods of oppression are undermined as they are shown to be reiterable elsewhere. Like the movement from the gestations of *ressentiment* to the birth of the sovereign subject for Nietzsche, the inward turn, for Bhabha, becomes a powerful tool for emergence. Building on Freud's description of the melancholic's transposition of aggression from one scene to another as "a mental constellation of revolt" ("Mourning" 248), he treats the replacement as a form of mimicry that doubles colonial authority. "In the colonial condition," he writes, the colonial subject's existence "is defined in a perpetual performativity that intervenes in that syntax or grammar of the superego, in order to disarticulate it" ("Postcolonial" 65). As Judith Butler explains in her reading of subjection as an incorporation of the state as an "ideal of 'Law,'" melancholic revolt reveals that "authority's ideality is incorporable elsewhere, no longer tied in any absolute sense to one figure of the law" and no longer the property of any given state (*Psychic* 190-91). In this art of "disincorporation," writes Bhabha, the borders of social and political space are redrawn. Ambivalent melancholic identification is at once a self-sacrifice and a gesture that aims, as Freud suggests of the possible transition from melancholy to mania in "The Ego and the Id," to "fend of its tyrant" ("Ego" 53) and so in effect to reclaim the "original" dynamic of externalized aggression against the other on the way toward declaring it dead.[11] Incorporated power, "entombed as loss at the point of its ideal authority," becomes "an authority whose meaning is continually contested" by the "motility of the signifiers of revolt" (Bhabha, "Postcolonial" 65).

Bhabha clarifies this reiterative displacement of meaning in terms that recall not only Frantz Fanon's description of the colonized subject, but also Feldman's and Aretxaga's descriptions of the hunger strikers:

> This inversion of meaning and address in the melancholic discourse--when it 'incorporates' the loss or lack in its own body, displaying its own weeping wounds--is also an act of 'disincorporating' the authority of the Master. Fanon, again, comes close to saying something similar when he suggests that the native wears his psychic wounds on the surface of his skin like an open sore--an eyesore to the colonizer. (65)

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[11] The "change round into mania" is a strategy of survival for the melancholic ego ("Ego" 53). In *Group Psychology*, Freud describes this mania (which oscillates with melancholia) as a case in which "the ego and the ego ideal have fused together, so that the person, in a mood of triumph and self-satisfaction, disturbed by no self-criticism, can enjoy the abolition of his inhibitions, his feelings of consideration for others, and his self-reproaches" (64).

In her treatment of Bhabha's theory, Butler stresses that while authority may be contested through incorporations that aim to achieve a complete work of mourning, it can never quite be "thrown off." This point follows from her argument, cited in Chapter 1, that the ego's existence is conditioned by the trace of the other "who is, at the moment of emergence, already at a distance," a trace from which "no final severance could take place without dissolving the ego" (195-96). Power, in other words, like the lost object of mourning, can neither be simply accepted or rejected, nor determined as something that appears either prior to or after the emergence of the ego, because it is an irreducible part of the ego's constitution across an ambivalent arm's length which "rules out the possibility of strict identity" (198).

Bhabha's reading of melancholic discourse as an inversion of meaning again borrows from Freud, who suggests that the "orders" of the verdict of reality ("that the loved object no longer exists") are carried out "bit by bit," in a "piecemeal" fashion ("Mourning" 244-45). Bhabha stresses that colonial narratives and "monumental" histories are incorporated and attacked "piecemeal" in the insistent but indirect communications of melancholic discourse. Reiterating these narratives in symbols that are "non-referential, fragmented, [and] phantasmatic," the language of melancholia reveals that this fragmentary failure to refer has always, in fact, been the condition of the stories it mimics: "It says: All these bits and pieces in which my history is fragmented, my culture piecemeal, my identifications fantasmatic and displaced; these splittings of wounds of my body are also a form of revolt. And they speak a terrible truth. In their ellipses and silences they dismantle your authority: the vanity of your mimetic narratives and your monumental history" (66).

Displacing the power of the colonial state "from one topos to another" (Feldman 237), the hunger strikers pull the foundations of its authority out from under it. Like the sovereign "I" constituted through the credit of the eternal return, the state becomes a "render rent" (Beckett, *Malone* 391).[12] It "does not exist" as an entity present to itself (Derrida, "Otobiographies" 13). Having described the monstrous state that "brutalises me to the point of death" but "does not kill me," Sands unintentionally comes to a similar conclusion: "Monsters do not exist" (Sands 159). Yet unintentionally, too, he ensures that the monster's victims, and those who mourn them, do not exist either. While unsettling the British state's sense of itself, the strikers simultaneously ensured that the nation that was to mourn them would experience a similar displacement of its own sense of fixed inheritance and continuous legacy founded on the "touchstones" of a discoverable Irish origin. The troubled issue of inheritance I have described in republican memories of the hunger strikers, in other words, is preconditioned by Sands's own encryptions of his precursors, through which he demonstrates also that "the past does not exist," that "it will never have existed in the present" (Derrida, *Mémoires* 59).

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[12] Malone applies this phrase to himself while admitting that he finds at the end of his story neither complete life nor death but a "birth [. . .] into death": "My head will be the last to die. Haul in your hands. I can't. The render rent. My story ended I'll be living yet" (391).

Sands lived, and died, in what he repeatedly calls a "nightmare" (26, 37, 51, 80, 81). Trapped within "the four screaming walls of a filthy nightmare-filled tomb" (81), he is haunted by ghosts of the past: not only the spirits of those martyrs he frequently invokes, but also the ghosts of the "marching dead"; of tortured blanketmen bearing crosses who peer at him "hauntingly" as they pass by "in ghostly sweep"; of Brian McGuire being sacrificed at a devil's pyre (122-24); and of those who died on the coffin ships (187-88). He deals with these apparitions by reducing them to himself. Describing himself as one in a series of caged larks, he proves his enduring identity by assimilating the remains of the dead and so achieving a sense of continuity with them. "I remain what I am," he writes, "a political prisoner of war, and no one can change that. Haven't we plenty of larks to prove that? Our history is heartbreakingly littered with them: the MacSwineys, the Gaughans, and the Staggs" (85). His writings are filled with this litter of history upon which he constructs his claim that "I'll always remain the same, an Irishman fighting for the freedom of my oppressed people" (97). "I remember," he writes, “and I shall never forget, how this monster took the lives of Tom Ashe, Terence MacSwiney, Michael Gaughan, Frank Stagg, and Hugh Coney” (160). The statement is repeated throughout his writings with slight variations: “Thomas Clarke is in my thoughts, and MacSwiney, Stagg, Gaughan, Thomas Ashe, McCaughey” (225); “I recall the Fenians and Tom Clarke” (229); “I have been thinking that some people (maybe many people) blame me for this hunger strike. [. . .] But didn’t we have people like that who sought to accuse Tone, Emmet, Pearse, Connolly, Mellowes: that unfortunate attitude is perennial also” (225); “I am but another of those wretched Irishmen born of a risen generation with a deeply rooted and unquenchable desire for freedom” (219); “this road is well trod. [. . .] I am but a mere follower” (225). Having established his continuity with the dead, he in turn anticipates Ireland’s assimilation of him: “the blood of countless patriots has not been enough” (205); “the struggle in the prisons goes hand-in-hand with the continuous freedom struggle in Ireland. Many Irishmen have given their lives in pursuit of this freedom and I know that more will, myself included, until such time as that freedom is achieved” (229). These kinds of descriptions led Denis Donoghue in 1981 to call the strikes “a carefully devised campaign to take possession of the entire tradition of Irish Republicanism, from the rising of 1798 to the Fenians and the Men of Easter week” (qtd. in O’Malley 141). Yet at the same time, Sands is prevented from taking possession, prevented from sweeping the litter of history into himself to establish his presence. As in the case of Nietzsche’s accumulative historian, his “raking together” of the past is a restless process (“Uses” 75), plagued by the awkward remainders of moments that refuse to die (“Uses” 61). Sands points to this failure not only through his restless recitations of the names of the dead, but by promising a future of equally restless commemorations of himself and his precursors.

Like McGuinness' admission that there is much "yet to be recorded" about the hunger strikes, Sands's commemorations, which anticipate their own repetition, both fail and look forward to failure. Lloyd's analysis of the ephemeral foundation of commemorative states helps in describing this kind of anticipatory failure. In *Anomalous States*, he suggests that the act of sacrifice to or for a nation establishes the martyr as a national representative. Through such sacrifices, the nation promises to prove true to itself. Spoken by Sands in anticipation of his own sacrifice, the Irish phrase "Tiocfaidh ár Lá"--Our Day Will Come--is, I would add, just such a promise (Sands 81; see also Sands 238 and Coogan 499). Like the sovereign's self-affirmation, and like the Declaration of Independence for Derrida, the sacrificial act "extends credit to itself" ("Declarations" 10)--the credit of eternally returning commemorations. As Lloyd puts it, referring to Pearse's description of national martyrs as burning symbols, "the martyr in his death identifies utterly with the nation to which he appeals," invoking "organic continuity between the symbol and what it represents" (*Anomalous* 71). Sands indicates such an identification not only with his precursors in the "perennial war" but with his future-oriented ideal of the nation as a republic from which "the foreign, oppressive British presence" will be removed. In a phrase frequently recited in commemorations of the past twenty years, he follows his description of himself as "but another" freedom-fighter with the explanation that "I am dying [. . .] primarily because what is lost in here is lost for the Republic and those wretched oppressed whom I am deeply proud to know as the 'risen people'" (219).

The continuity between martyr and nation established by performative acts of conceptual and material violence like those of 1916 and the hunger strikes, however, is simultaneously breached by the same acts, lending an unintentional insight to statements like that of Bishop Cahal Daly, in 1974, that "there is no historical continuity whatsoever between the present, largely faceless leaders of the self-styled 'Republican movement' and their honourable forebears" (qtd. in O'Malley 142). It is breached because, as Lloyd has argued, "the founding of any nation state is necessarily an act of violence irrupting as an absolute discontinuity in the course of history, an utter transformation by way of a singularly transformative utterance, and its legitimacy is established not in itself but in the subsequent rememoration it invokes"--rememoration that "ensures the reproduction of a social form by way of the reinvocation of the moment of terror that founded it" (*Anomalous* 72-73).

Where the signatories of the Proclamation that was mailed into the future to a nonexistent address (Brannigan 61) posited themselves as the authors of a republic by appealing to the previous authority of those "dead generations" credited with passing on the "tradition of nationhood," Sands makes similar appeals to his precursors. His appeals also resemble the more recent conviction of mourners that the strikers who shared their convictions (for Nietzsche, the "prison walls" of faith in the accuracy of language; for O'Malley, the traps of myth and sectarianism; for Joyce, the "nets" of "nationality, language, and religion" [*Portrait* 220]) are "still here" and "live on" (O'Malley 260-84). The living on of these authorities is always divisive, however, because their acts and statements, like those of any author, cannot be incorruptibly incarcerated or incarnated in the mind of a receiver or inheritor. As reiterable signifiers, they become orphans instead, cut off from the assistance of their fathers, cut off from what Soros describes as the "immaculate conception" and self-reproduction that Bloom seeks through his fantasy of male pregnancy as a form of "total f-authorship, where the writer controls the reader, has absolute presence in her mind" (Soros 24). Any performance or proclamation supposed to impregnate the receiver with its original intent becomes instead a "failure to deliver," an abortion (28)--an abandoned work and a work of mourning. Like the illusory ideal of a self-sufficient and "self-proclaimed" speech which establishes its presence by "believ[ing] itself to be its own father," it is in fact always alienated from itself as soon as it is uttered, always "born out of a primary gap and a primary *expatriation*, condemning it to wandering and blindness, to mourning" (*Grammatology* 39). Because the performative utterance or sacrifice that brings them into existence can always be lost in the mail, so too the people-to-be-delivered by this act are constituted by the possibility of failing to arrive at their destined nation.

5. The Laughter of Children

Sands's desire for freedom is "deeply rooted" (219) in the history of other martyrs who in turn are also deeply rooted in the origins and causes of republican self-sacrifice. The roots to which both he and his sources refer, however, recede endlessly into the past as a series of martyrs cite one another on their journey back in descending order toward an original Ireland. A republic that will "never die" has, paradoxically, still to be born into existence at a time and place somewhere "onward" from now: "I may die, but the

Republic of 1916 will never die. Onward to the Republic and the liberation of our people" (Sands 228). Lloyd finds a similarly disoriented journey being undertaken by Sands's precursors, the nationalist Young Irelanders of the mid-nineteenth century, who were "obliged to graft themselves back on to a Gaelic past in order to claim it as their proper heritage" (*Anomalous* 45). To go back they went on. They sought "an identity and unity of the people that supposedly pre-existed the shattering invasion of an alien power" (46) through a paradoxically "future-oriented project of Irish nationalism" which, reproducing an imperial narrative of universal development, promoted cultural and individual ethical development as a condition for "integration with a still to be realized fatherland" (*Anomalous* 45). Feldman describes the same dynamic in the prison protest of their "mere followers" in 1981--a protest whose "overwhelming theme" was "a future reunification with rediscovered submerged Republican traditions, with a precolonial Gaelic cultural order, and with the Irish people as a historical/ethical/linguistic agency to be created" (164). The figures of the past toward which Sands looks to establish his authority were, paradoxically, looking toward a future in which their own authority would be established. Both he and they discover only that the original of which they are merely copies and followers lies always before them in a series of reflections extending toward both the past and the future.

Derrida describes the abyss of representation as "an indefinite process of supplementarity [that] has always already infiltrated presence, always already inscribed there the space of repetition and the splitting of the self." He finds an exemplar of this process in the mime portrayed in Mallarme's *Mimique*, who plays a role comparable to the one taken on also by Sands and his precursors. Emphasizing the perpetually distanced structure of representation where each signified becomes the signifier of another signified, Derrida offers a second-hand record of Mallarme's story, which itself is a second-hand record of a second edition of another author's record of the original performance. In the original, a mime is ordered to do away with the notion of origins. He is instructed "to imitate nothing that in any way preexists his operation" (198). The result is that his performance is a form of writing that "refers back only to itself." As a "mirror of a mirror" that "reflects no reality," his performance represents "difference without reference, or rather a reference without a referent, without any first or last unit, a ghost that is the phantom of no flesh" (206). The original upon which any such staged re-enactment is conventionally assumed to be modeled falls into an abyss of indefinitely multiplied reflections. Derrida's description of a writing performed "*en abyme*," borrowing an expression used in heraldry, refers to the indefinite repetition of one image within another--an effect produced when a shield is decorated by the image of a shield decorated by the image of a shield, and so on, so that "each reference still confines us within the element of reflection" (202, 265 t.n). The same effect is produced when we stand between two mirrors set "before" us and find an original model receding repeatedly behind and ahead of itself. It is also produced when the sovereign posts his cry of self-affirmation into the horizon of the future for pickup, and when the Unnamable launches his voice into the walled horizon in which he hopes to find himself, only to discover that the "enormous prison" or "vault" is in fact an abyss: "you launch your voice, it dies away in the vault, it calls that a vault, perhaps it's the abyss" (570).

If Sands's search for precursors can be read, in the context of reiterated commemoration, as a strategy of writing in an the abyss, it may also be doubled by the fact that the mime's performance is an act not only of copying but of mourning. Pierrot tells the story of how he has killed and buried his wife, who, as he comes to the climax of his narration, comes to life inside her portrait and bursts out laughing (198-201). We can redirect Derrida's reading toward mourning, then, by treating the mime's story as a tale of the lost object's resistance to assimilation. Pierrot, in this scene, is laughing at himself, because in his solo performance he takes on the part of both husband and wife, mourner and mourned. This scene of self-derision takes on certain aspects of the scene of melancholic identification. The aggression that would otherwise be taken out on his wife is turned back on himself as he splits in two, enacting what Derrida describes as a kind of suicide (201). In Gautier's version of this story--one of several adaptations that haunt the context of Mallarmé's book--Pierrot returns from the grave after his obituary is read out on stage. He then decides to commit suicide by playing both parts of a story he recalls having read: "'The tale of a husband who tickled his wife, / And thus made her laughingly give up her life.'" Catching him in this act of self-sacrifice, his wife asks: "'Who's this idiot pinching himself just for fun?'" Pierrot replies: "A ghost who is dying'" (204). The scene of incorporating the other, and the self as other, coincides with the performative moment in which "the mime imitates nothing, reproduces nothing, opens up in its origin the very thing he is tracing out, presenting, or producing" (205). The mourner performs himself into existence. Obliged "to write himself on the white page he is," to "inscribe himself through gestures and plays of facial expressions" (198), the mime participates in the mournful structure of arche-writing that opens the field of history. He dramatizes the paradox of inscribing a present that comes after the trace of the other. He prompts us to recognize, that is, that the concept of a beginning is always destabilized by the fact that the origin is only conceivable as a retrospective effect of what follows. In such a performance, the first moment is unthinkable except through differential relation to a second moment or non-origin which thus comes "first" in the order of conceptualization, deferring the origin and depriving it of its autonomy and authority. The same paradox applies, as Young points out, to the thought of a cultural origin or a state of precolonial purity (82). Conceived from the start through the possibility of its absence, such a pure place is inhabited and sacrificed from the first by the trace of colonial corruption that makes it impossible to recollect or return to.

When Sands indicates that such a pure past can only be found in the future, he affirms his authority in a "moment" of foundation evoked also by Nietzsche and Yeats. Zarathustra's affirmation of eternal return emerges at such a moment, as does Yeats's affirmation of a unified "phaseless sphere" outside time. For Zarathustra, the affirmation of presence occurs at a "gateway" between past and future. The name of the gateway, inscribed on its arch, is "Moment." Nietzsche's description of this architectural hinge follows on the heels of a passage about the "abyss" toward which a "crippled" and "crippling" dwarf, named the "Spirit of Gravity," draws Zarathustra. Zarathustra summons "courage" as a way to overcome the giddiness of peering into the abyss, which is everywhere. "Where does man not stand at an abyss?," he asks, adding: "Is seeing itself not--seeing abysses?" (*Thus* 177). The abyss appears, that is, whenever we look for ourselves and find, as Nietzsche puts it in *Beyond Good and Evil*, "an abysmally deep ground behind every ground, under every attempt to furnish 'grounds'" (289). Zarathustra shares his "abysmal thought" about the gateway with the Spirit of Gravity, who he assumes will be unable to "endure" its lightness (*Thus* 178). Recognition of the gateway at the abyss, after all, demands a revaluation of "endurance" from the burdensome concept of memory and responsibility to what Derrida calls the "light, airy, dancing, solar yes, yes" of authorial instability (Derrida, "Ulysses" 53). "'Behold this gateway, dwarf!'" Zarathustra demands:

> 'Two paths come together here: no one has ever reached their end. This long lane behind us, it goes on for an eternity. And that long lane ahead of us--that is another eternity [. . .].
>
> The name of the gateway is written above it: "Moment" [. . .].
>
> From this gateway Moment a long, eternal lane runs back: an eternity lies behind us. Must not all things that can run have already run along this lane? Must not all things that can happen have already happened, been done, run past [. . .].
>
> And are not all things bound fast together in such a way that this moment draws after it all future things? *Therefore*--draws itself too? For all things that can run must also run once again forward along this long lane.' (178-79)

The moment of presence, which in Nietzsche's earlier essay draws a horizon around its past, here "draws after it all future things" instead. Yet this might be read as an alternative version of the same gesture if we consider the moment as one which, as it reinscribes its borders, contains the past only by seizing upon a future in which the litter of history will at last be raked together. Frances Oppel draws the connection between the gateway and Yeats's "phaseless sphere" ("Yeats's" 7). For Yeats, the sphere of ideal unity beyond time and space is also one where going back is going on. It is a place where "a being racing into the future passes a being racing into the past, two footprints perpetually obliterating one another, toe to heel, heel to toe" (*Vision* 210). The movement of these footprints that resist and efface one another, each torn in two directions, is--like the legwork (or legacy work) that passes from *pas* to *pas* in Derrida's readings of both Mallarmé and Freud--a "step" forward that is also a "negation" of itself ("Double" 242; *Post* 292n). The print of the foot, and the print of the writing of history, contradict their own gestures. Like the word "Moment" inscribed on the arch of a temporal gateway, the foot's imprint is balanced above an abyss. Elsewhere, Yeats has described philosophical questioning as a necessary activity through which "an abyss opens under our feet," and during which "inherited convictions, the pre-suppositions of our thoughts, [. . .] drop into the abyss" (*Essays* 502-03). For Yeats as for Nietzsche, the abyss seems to appear most clearly when when we plant our feet courageously at the gateway of eternal return and look down to find our foundations in ruins. The connection can be emphasized if we read Yeats's above comments on philosophy from 1936 retrospectively in the context of his earlier description of self-construction through creative performance in "The Death of Synge": to recognize the abyss is perhaps to accept the obligation to be reborn "as something not oneself, something which has no memory and is created in a moment and perpetually renewed" (*Autobiographies* 503).

Recognition of a condition of perpetual renewal may be both the product and producer of our continued resistance to it through affirmations of our potential to arrive at individual or national identity. In the *Archaeology*, Foucault accentuates the distinction he acknowledges also in "Theatricum" between a simple return of the identical and a complex recurrence. "The description of statements and discursive formations," he argues, "must [. . .] free itself from the widespread and persistent image of return," of going back toward a "moment of foundation when speech was not yet caught up in any form of materiality" (125). Seeming to support the position of Nietzsche's sovereign who frees himself from the possibility of identical repetition even as he affirms it, and of the critical historian who constructs new illusions that anticipate their own destruction, Foucault uses the term "*recurrence*" (124) as a more accurate way to describe statements as events that destroy the only context in which they might possibly be repeated identically. If the hunger strikers destroy one illusion in the aim of returning to another, their drive to reconstruct might be read as the obligation of "all great things, 'which never succeed without some illusion,'" as Nietzsche notes in "Uses" (97). "All great things," however--reiterated in relation to the sovereign whose affirmation marks him as the "ripest fruit" of such an illusion--simultaneously "bring about their destruction through an act of self-overcoming" (*Genealogy* 2.2; 3.27). They are, to resituate Sands's description of Irish martyrs, "condemned to death from birth" (Sands 211), but to a death that can neither succeed in returning them to an originally unified state, nor return them intact to the state that seeks unification as it mourns them.

I have argued that the prison protest, which reappropriated and undermined the authority of the British, turns the same enabling force of performative disruption against the history of sacrifice that is proposed as their own foundation of authority. Martin Ferris unintentionally articulated this reversal of fortune in his address at the eighteenth annual Bobby Sands Memorial Lecture in Belfast. He described the hunger strikes as an event which "shook both the northern and southern states to their foundations and laid the foundations for political developments that are beginning to bear fruit today" (qtd. in *An Phoblacht*, 6 May 1999). Yet that fruit--recalling Sands's description of "freedom's fruit" that will "blossom" from the "darkness of the tomb" (137)--is born of a tree not "deeply rooted" in the origins of sacrificial freedom-fighting (Sands 219), but uprooted by the knife of the critical historian (Nietzsche, "Uses" 76). In Nietzsche's later metaphors from the *Genealogy*, the knife that uproots is replaced by a stomach that is willfully dyspeptic. The critical historian and the sovereign subject, if we follow this transposition of metaphors into a reading that crosses the contexts of both figures while revising Nietzsche's descriptions of them, can both be interpreted as "ripe fruits" of a memory that labours to judge and destroy the inherited past, and who come together under the imagery of internal organs. After a labour of internalization that fosters responsibility through guilt, the fruitful womb brings forth the sovereign subject who voluntarily affirms this inward division as that which gives him the right to project himself into the future as something that is both self-identical (returning) and recreated in every instant (recurring) (*Genealogy* 2.2, 2.18; *Thus* 234). This womb might also be read as the ruminating stomach of a critical historian's in-digestive system which repeatedly brings forth a reconstituted version of the received truths it has been fed. The history of the hunger strikers is recommemorated and reproduced in a comparable way. Like the republican violence so often described as "unspeakable" in cursory official responses from both the British and Irish governments, repeated labours of mourning reveal that the strikers' acts of "self-inflicted" violence are also unspeakable, irrecoverable, unnamable.

"It's a poor trick that consists in ramming a set of words down your gullet on the principle that you can't bring them up without being branded as belonging to their breed," says the Unnamable, catching on to the cunning strategy of his oppressors to divert him from his true history. Inundating him with their language, they have obliged him to speak of things "that don't concern me," things "that they have crammed me full of to prevent me from saying who I am." "But I'll fix their gibberish for them," he decides:

> I never understood a word of it in any case, not a word of the stories it spews, like gobbets in a vomit. My inability to absorb, my genius for forgetting, are more than they reckoned with. Dear incomprehension, it's thanks to you I'll be myself, in the end. Nothing will remain of all the lies they have glutted me with. And I'll be myself at last, as a starveling belches his odourless wind, before the bliss of coma. (449)

His description of the "genius for forgetting" as an "inability to absorb" seems at first to oppose Nietzsche's characterizations. For Nietzsche, the inability to absorb is a function not of forgetting but of memory, that "active desire not to rid oneself" of an impression (*Genealogy* 2.1). But the Unnamable is in fact being typically Nietzschean by speaking a contradiction and treating the two processes as a single dynamic: he refuses to absorb not in order to retain an impression but in order to ensure that "nothing remains" of what he has been fed. In doing so, he articulates the paradox where memory coincides with forgetting, where recognition of the other (or the past) as unassimilable is a corequisite of the desire to assimilate and be rid of it. Both critical historian and impossible mourner experience this condition in which, to consider oneself capable of containing, one first has to construct such a self in relation to an other that can never be contained. Memory, for the Unnamable, becomes the condition of possibility of forgetting, as well as its condition of impossibility. To be rid of the words of his "tyrants" (429), he has to take them into himself as other. The belch of the starveling, then, will issue not from the self evacuated of all others, but from the crypt where the undigested other both lives and dies.

The best the Unnamable can do is to go on remembering to forget, failing repeatedly to settle on either, and remaining aware that, each time the "art of forgetting" is put back into play, the illusion of self-presence it achieves will have its contours altered by the reshapen meal it carries inside it. Obliged to seek sameness through difference, immediacy through historicity, and presence through a future-oriented recollection of the past, the oblivious absorber will always also be the dyspeptic non-absorber whose "apparatus of repression [forgetfulness] is damaged and ceases to function properly" (*Genealogy* 2.1). The "collected work" that will complete his possibilities approaches, but will never arrive, from the future to which he abandons himself. Paradoxically committed to speaking of a silence beyond the contagious corruption of words, the Unnamable turns words against words in two ways at once; he destroys himself due to their inability to refer to him or recollect his history (their "tendency to annihilate all they purport to record" [Beckett, *Malone* 351]) while also using them as a cure for precisely this problem. Thus he goes on but never gets anywhere. While Adams argues that the only fitting monument to the republican dead lies in the future, the Unnamable also defers his ideal of unity into a future in which the words that fail him may finally achieve the status of fitting monuments to what they describe. The critical historian turns history against history in an equally reversible sense that reduces his monuments to rubble; he deploys the annihilating power of memory against the illusory reassurances of forgetting, but he also reverses the procedure, alternately healing the wounds of memory with the medicine of forgetting. Turning the sting of words and history against themselves, the Unnamable as critical historian is obliged to recognize that his acts of foundation and monumentalization are delegitimated by the fact that they are always one in a series of promissory performances. His rejections of history are always historical acts. Coming into being by delegitimating a previous presence ("it's not I"), his affirmations ("I'll go on") will in turn be liberated from their origins upon reiteration.

Sands's rhetoric also immerses him in history even as he counsels a rupture from it. Insisting that continued republican sacrifice is the only way to prevent a past of colonial oppression from repeating itself, he offers to exchange one history with another that is a part of the same. On one hand, he points convincingly and persistently to the need for change. The fact that "the economic, cultural and physical oppression" of the Irish people "has not changed" in his century shows that "there is no future in Ireland under oppression, only the same tragic history repeating itself in every decade"; "the result is always the same--oppression and torture"; "the repetition continues" (203-04), and “nothing changes” in the H-Blocks (232). The solution to this is to generate resistance by remembering the “countless” figures of Irish martyrdom (203). Yet this history-to-be-remembered seems equally resistant to change. Like the antiquarian historian who finds himself by reading his history on the walls of his city, ideal republican citizens find themselves by identifying with these figures as well as with the ten H-Block martyrs, all of whose images cover the walls of Catholic districts in northern towns. A 1996 mural on Rossville Street in Derry (where the hunger strikers compete for wall-space with the martyrs of Bloody Sunday) dramatizes Sands’s point about repetition. It depicts a crouched skeletal figure being beaten from both sides by two RUC officers from different eras--“‘68” and “‘96”--one wearing an orange sash and black cap, the other dressed in riot gear. The caption beneath reads, “Nothing Has Changed.” The histories of oppression and resistance to which Sands refers both appear, at first glance, to be fixed in such figures. The dream of an Irish Republic promotes the antiquarian sense of an inheriting nation that has grown purposefully out of its past and never “ceased to be faithful to its own origins” (“Uses” 73-74). Also mapped onto the republican context is the monumental view, which celebrates great anniversaries and icons and, as implied by the conviction that “nothing changes,” runs the danger of detracting from valuable gestures of resistance by inspiring fanaticism “with seductive similarities” (“Uses” 71). To escape the repetitions of a colonial history of domination and torture, both Sands’s texts and the murals of Northern Ireland may appear, in this view, to offer only a commemorative rhetoric that is itself a repetition of a republican history of resistance and sacrifice. Sands foresees a new start in the liberation of his people, a new “day [that] will dawn when all the people of Ireland will have the desire for freedom to show" (239), when "by hard work and sacrifice" they will arrive at "the achievement of the Socialist Republic" (235) which will release them from the "perennial war that is being fought between the oppressed Irish people and an alien, oppressive, unwanted regime" (219). Yet this is also an old start, which, as de Man has said of every claim to be inaugurating a new beginning, "turns out to be the repetition of a claim that has always already been made" ("Literary History"161)--in this case by the Proclamation, which calls also for "sacrifice" and the overthrow of "an alien government."

If such claims are repetitive, however, they are also new, in the sense that every reiteration is both new and used, both an imitation and a reconfiguration of a previous work abandoned to its imminent adaptation in an alternate context. Lloyd has analyzed such contextual reconfigurations in murals that juxtapose old-fashioned idealized aesthetic images of Ireland, or figures of resistance fighters from other nations and time periods, with contemporary Irish political figures, while also re-locating such traditional forms and figures within the architecture of a modern-day Belfast scarred and structured by recent conflict. This kind of juxtaposition, he notes, resists "the historicist desire to put subaltern memory in its place, to fix its proper moment in historical time" (*Ireland* 98). It points to a "transhistorical and transnational identity between moments and movements" (99) and haunts the present with the continuing relevance of forms that a developmental or modernizing historicism would like to consign to an atavistic past. As I have suggested, the dead resist not only what Lloyd calls the "morbid logic of identity" (27) of the British state, but also that of the Irish nation. Starting from Lloyd's emphasis on the way in which the colonial state considers itself a "modern" formation, the same can arguably be said of Sands's own paradoxically backward-looking projection of the republic into the future, a republic always on the verge of delivery and identity with the dead. To "forget" the British, Sands remembers the Irish, who in turn have developed a sense of themselves only through remembering their constitutive relation to the structures of colonial power they seek to be rid of. Contextual reconfiguration is also accentuated by the fact that the claim that "Nothing Has Changed" is affirmed by an art form which, while it invites the national subject to find its history in the walls of its city in the antiquarian mode, also draws attention to its own ephemerality. The murals in Northern towns are painted, as Rolston points out, in anticipation of their own obliteration and revision due not only to the "lack of durability" in the materials and the artists' desire to alter their own work to address changing political issues, but to the expectation of sectarian vandalism which can paradoxically work to the artists' advantage in the sense that "a destroyed mural is as strong a statement in the propaganda war as one in pristine condition" (*Drawing* vi).

One such mural was recently repainted on the gable wall of the Sinn Féin Office on Belfast's Falls Road to recommemorate Sands's death. Contained in the frame of Sands's image is a phrase from the twelfth day of his hunger strike diary: "Our revenge will be the laughter of our children." Like the refinished image of Sands over which it is written, the phrase has been rendered different to itself. The "original" is a promise to reappropriate the derisive laughter of the H-Block authorities: "Unlike their laughs and jibes, our laughter will be the joy of victory and the joy of the people, our revenge will be the liberation of all and the final defeat of the oppressors of our aged nation" (232). The mural's inscription (a version frequently reproduced and popularized in contemporary republican memorabilia) revises the statement by emphasizing Sands's repeated juxtaposition of his own death-like existence with images of "future generations" of children either swearing upon the graves of the dead to fulfil their precursors' visions (202) or filling the cells of self-sacrifice with living laughter: "From the darkness of my lonely tomb, [. . .] [m]y mind conjures up colourful images of smiling girls and laughing children" (166). Nietzsche's Zarathustra also emphasizes the juxtaposition of children's laughter and tombs in the process of revaluation. He recalls dreaming of a coffin that "burst asunder and vomited forth a thousand peals of laughter [. . .] from a thousand masks of children, angels, owls, fools, and child-sized butterflies" (*Thus* 157). His disciple interprets the dream as an illustration of the life-affirming force of laughter that follows from the discernment of new things--an illustration, that is (to resituate the title of Nietzsche's earlier text) of the use of laughter for life. The dream shows that "Zarathustra comes into all sepulchres like a thousand peals of children's laughter." "You advocate of life!" the disciple continues, "you have shown us new stars and new glories of the night; truly you have spread out laughter itself above us like a motley canopy. Henceforth laughter of children will always issue from coffins; henceforth a strong wind will always come, victorious, to all weariness unto death" (*Thus* 158).

This laughter that breaks from the grave is also one of terrible beauty. With it, Zarathustra "will terrify and overthrow" all "night-watchmen and grave-watchmen, and whoever else rattles gloomy keys" (158). It provides a link, then, between two images of rebirth offered by Yeats, who read *Zarathustra* in 1902. The "terrible beauty" of a newly-delivered nation in "Easter 1916" is joined, in Zarathustra's laughter, to the attitude of "laughing ecstatic destruction" that Yeats later attributed to the rough beast slouching toward Bethlehem to be born (qtd. in Bohlmann 179). Through similarly "monstrous" imagery in "Structure, Sign, and Play," Derrida associates the laughter of active forgetting and revaluation with *différance*, with that "as yet unnamable which is proclaiming itself and which can do so [. . .] only under the species of nonspecies, in the formless, mute, infant, and terrifying form of monstrosity" (292). The proclamation is terrifying in its destruction of presence, yet also exhilirating in its "Nietzschean affirmation" of absence, in its "joyous affirmation of the play of the world and of the innocence of becoming, the affirmation of a world of signs without fault, without truth, and without origin which is offered to an active interpretation" (292). As Derrida emphasizes in "Différance," the death of presence is proclaimed not in a mood of nostalgia for lost origins, but rather "in a certain laughter and a certain step of the dance" (27). In Yeats's "The Gyres"--a poem whose central symbol evokes the eternal return--the same laughter of "tragic joy" heralds the disinterment of the dead from a "broken sepulchre" and their subsequent return by way of "that unfashionable gyre" on which "all things run" repeatedly (*Collected* 337). This conception of revaluation as a laughter emanating from what was previously considered dead is anticipated by Yeats's earlier play, *The King's Threshold*. Parallels between this play and the 1981 hunger strikes have been foregrounded by Beresford and O'Malley, both of whom cite passages from the text as a framing device for their accounts. "When I and these are dead," says Yeats's hunger striking poet of himself and his apprentices, in what Beresford calls "as fitting an epitaph as any" (431) for the H-Block strikers,

> We should be carried to some windy hill
> To lie there with uncovered face awhile
> That mankind and that leper there may know
> Dead faces laugh.
> King! King! Dead faces laugh. (309-10)

This citation, like that of Sands's phrases on laughter in the Sinn Féin Office mural, is a rewrite. As Beresford notes, Yeats's first version of the play in 1904 allowed the poet, Seanchan, to give up his protest and live. After MacSwiney's death from hunger strike in 1920, however, Yeats revised the last scene to incorporate the tragic ending that he said he "had originally intended" (qtd. in *Variorium* 310).

While Yeats's revision sends its origin into a future that accounts for the context of subsequent events, the dream reading of Zarathustra's disciple, by associating the seeing of "new stars" with a laughter that disrupts coffins, dramatizes the gestures of historical sense through a more complex balance of metaphors used also by Nietzsche and reiterated by Foucault. The critical historian reconfigures his origins "for the sake of life" ("Uses" 77) by discerning new constellations of events, by reawakening and reassembling those moments which for the forgetful historian are dead and buried. But the reconstellation is always placed under erasure by the knowledge of provisionality that allowed it to occur at all: as forgetting is threatened by remembering, the moment of affirmation itself coincides with negation. Accordingly, after listening to his disciple's interpretation and seeming at first to have "understood everything," Zarathustra grows gloomy again, turns to the interpreter, and shakes his head (*Thus* 158-59). Nietzsche introduces the metaphor of constellations in "On Truth and Falsity." The "construction of ideas" (187) is the project of the anthropomorphic subject who, like the astrologer "contemplat[ing] the stars in the service of man," "strives for an understanding of the world as a human-like thing and by his battling gains at best the feeling of an assimilation" (183). In doing so, this subject resists recognizing that "all obedience to law which impresses us so forcibly in the orbits of stars and in chemical processes coincides at bottom with those qualities which we ourselves attach to those things" (186). In "Uses," Nietzsche extends the metaphor to argue that such constructions, or possibilities, cannot be repeated identically. Dismissing the monumentalist urge to model one age upon another, he argues that "that which was once possible could present itself as a possibility for a second time only if the Pythagoreans were right in believing that when the constellation of the heavenly bodies is repeated[,] the same things, down to the smallest event, must also be repeated on earth" ("Uses" 70).

Foucault adopts the imagery of constellation in his description of the historical sense as one that repeatedly discerns new stars and new relations between them. The statement-events within a historian's archive (as well as the laws that govern their recognizability as meaningful events) "do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass," he writes, "nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity." Rather, "they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities." As they record the emergence and fading of possible discourses, he suggests, historians ought to recognize that their discernment of the past is limited by the contemporary discourse they inhabit, that the events of the past "do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale" (*Archaeology* 129).

In place of the consolations of a totalizing history that appears to complete the work of mourning, the "historical sense" offers constellations of history, and constellations of revolt. Like the horizon drawn around the subject of forgetting, the lines arbitrarily drawn between the events within the historian's view are exposed to reorganization in new relations as acquired truths are submitted, as Foucault has put it, to "appropriation and rivalry" (*Archaeology* 105). It is a rivalry more enabling than the one enacted when unionist and republican services coincided on the day of Sands's death. Exceeding both stories, it prompts the mourning subject to attend its own wake by waking itself from both Stephen Dedalus' and Sands's "nightmare" of history.[13] Delegitimating the sources behind concepts of either identical repetition or seamless continuity, it suggests that the only thing open to emulation is the kind of performative disruption enacted by the mourning of the hunger strikes that renders history unnamable. The Unnamable's successors, like those of the hunger strikers and the martyrs of Easter 1916, persist in their effort to recapture what is lost by "murmur[ing] name upon name"

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[13] Stephen's comment, "History [. . .] is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake" (*Ulysses* 28), responds specifically to Mr Deasy's bigoted support of British rule and anti-semitism, but can be read also into Stephen's responses to the restrictions of both colonialist and nationalist histories in the rest of *Ulysses* and in *Portrait*.

(Yeats, "Easter 1916," *Collected* 204). The aim of the narrating voice in *Company* is to "have the hearer have a past and acknowledge it" (24)--a past in which the hearer will have been born, like the Republic, at Easter: "You first saw the light of day the day Christ died and now. [. . .] You are on your back in the dark" (10). In the following novella from *Nohow On*, a trilogy that repeats the structure of Beckett's previous trilogy, the observing eye fails to have done with the memory of the old woman, who in turn fails to have done with the memory of a lost one. The eye, as I noted at the beginning of this chapter, finds itself finally stranded on the impossible hope that enough moments will remain to consume what it remembers: "Grant only enough remain to devour all. Moment by glutton moment. Sky earth the whole kit and boodle. Not another crumb of carrion left. Lick chops and basta." But there is always the need for another: "No," he continues, "One moment more. One last. Grace to breathe that void. Know happiness" (*Ill* 86). The narrator of the third novella continues the effort. It aims to go "worstward ho" by ridding its mind of all words and images, by going persistently "on back to unsay" what it has said in the past (*Worstward* 102). In the process it finds, however, that to go back is to go always somehow on: "Back is on. Somehow on" (109). Even its claim to have reached a point from where there is "nohow on" is, after all, not an ending of speaking but a speaking of ending: "Nohow on," it concludes, "Said nohow on" (116).

The prisoners' statement on the end of the second hunger strike concludes with a reaffirmation, a commitment, and a valuation of the dead: "we reaffirm our commitment to the achievement of the five demands. [. . .] Under no circumstances are we going to devalue the memory of our dead comrades by submitting ourselves to a dehumanising and degrading regime" (qtd. in Campbell, McKeown and O'Hagan 264). Delivering the seventeenth annual Bobby Sands Memorial Lecture, Eoghan McCormaic, who was in the H-Blocks during the dirty protest and hunger strikes, remembered the post-strike negotiations for political status anticipated by the above statement. "At the end of the second hunger-strike we were deluged by propaganda and documents," he said. "We were dazzled by the fine print. Trying to work out how we could put political status into the document" (qtd. in "Remembering"). Instead of accepting such documents, they reassembled the terms they had been offered and treated them like the rules Foucault has described as unfinalized, capable of being "bent to any purpose." They saw, in their own way, that historical success involves seizing and redirecting the meaning of rules "against those who had initially imposed them" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 151). "In the aftermath of the hunger strike nothing was accepted as final," McCormaic explained to the mourners assembled: "Everything was tested against our own agenda. We took advantage of the rules, subverting them, turning them in on the system." He then went on to argue that the Good Friday Agreement was equally unfinalized, and could be similarly reassembled: "People are worried about the Good Friday document, and ask if it's enough. Of course it isn't, it isn't a republican document. It does not offer a solution. [. . .] But like the document on offer during the prison protests, we shouldn't try to square our principles with this document. We should look at the document as something that moves the process on and take advantage of that." His recognition of incompleteness, however, gestures at the same time in the opposite direction--toward finality, a goal that transcends the text: "We must keep our eye on the goal, not the detail of the document" (qtd. in *An*

Phoblacht, 8 May 1997). Such "*progressus* toward a goal" is, for Nietzsche, repeatedly diverted through revisions of "'meaning' and 'purpose'" (*Genealogy* 2.12), but it is nevertheless a part of the critical historian's strategy. The historical sense works within the idea of a goal, yet also operates beyond its borders. In the context of the Good Friday Agreement, it would remain aware that the detail of both the document and its revisions reach outside of themselves, exceeding the possibility of such an unhistorical horizon even as they gesture toward it.

As the opposing views of Pat McGeown and Bik McFarlane remind us, the same undecidable orientation toward fragmentation and finality, or division and transcendence, was experienced not only after but during the protests. When he joined the hunger strike after Joe McDonnell's death, McGeown endured what McFarlane, in messages to Gerry Adams, called an "internal conflict" on the hunger striking question (qtd. in Beresford 380-81). He "had always been worried about the blanket protest, the hearkening back to [Terence] MacSwiney and those who endure the most," explains Beresford. He would have preferred for the prisoners "to be more flexible, to adopt a two-pronged approach--try to destroy the system by working within it while at the same time standing outside it" (Beresford 378-79). Nearly three weeks into his fast, McGeown admitted to McFarlane that these doubts remained, and argued that Sinn Féin should be more willing to negotiate with the inadequate solutions offered by state and church representatives (Beresford 379). McFarlane later wrote to inform Adams that McGeown "has come through a pretty rough week or two of internal conflict which he appears to have risen above yesterday." "[But who] can be certain?," he added, "Only himself, I suppose. Every man must face similar problems and each must overcome inner conflicts" (qtd. in Beresford 381). The mourning of the hunger strikes shows that such overcoming is as uncertain as the writing of history. When acts of violence and sacrifice are deprived of their legitimating origin, when they fail to make sense of themselves through appeals to the past, alternative strategies of political revision may be sought which, like recent moves on decommissioning and on political re-designation during Assembly elections, exceed the limits of historical legacies and responsibilities.

Chapter 5

The Path to Peace

1. Responsibility

> I have always taken a lesson from something that was told me by a sound man, that is, that everyone, Republican or otherwise, has his own particular part to play. No part is too great or too small, no one is too old or too young to do something. [. . .]
>
> Only the greater mass of the Irish nation will ensure the achievement of the Socialist Republic, and that can only be done by hard work and sacrifice. So, *mo chara*, for what it's worth, I would like to thank you all for what you have done and I hope many others follow your example. (Sands 235)

Written on the fourteenth day of his hunger strike, Sands's personal note to his Sinn Féin contact outside the Maze advocates responsibility and affirms a continuous legacy between exemplary republicans and followers who take lessons from them. Prompted by repetitions of these concerns in political rhetoric since Sands, this chapter focuses on a paradox of simultaneous responsibility and irresponsibility that troubles demands to remain faithful to historical lessons and legacies. To go on, I want first to go back to Adams' 2001 Easter Rising Commemoration Speech. This is the speech in which he paradoxically repeats Sands's example in order to dissuade his audience from repeating Sands's example: "You have to accept that you have a role to play in this struggle. [. . .] You do not have to emulate the hunger strikers" (qtd. in Watt).

Adams' first statement endorses continuous ties between past and present. Accordingly, it repeats the message established in previous annual commemorations. In 2000, he had cited the same passage from Sands's diary at a hunger strike commemoration following the IRA's 6 May commitment to decommissioning: "It's our responsibility to join the struggle. It is our responsibility to find some little thing to do, selling *An Phoblacht*, being involved in commemorations, being active in your own community" (qtd. in "Thousands March"). So, too, had Martin Ferris in 1999: "All people can play their part" in the struggle, he told Sands's mourners. "There is no point in people sitting here and reflecting [on the hunger strike] unless we ask ourselves what is our responsibility for advancing the struggle." The goal of "a united democratic socialist 32-county Ireland," he added, "will only be achieved if everyone plays their part no matter how small, no matter how great" (qtd. in "Lesson"). Adams' second statement, however, begins to suggest that such ties should be broken. It moves away from the message established by both himself and Ferris and instead encourages a break from the ties of political tradition. It moves, that is, toward a definition of republican responsibility as the need for discontinuity rather than continuity, and so ironically approaches a view of republicanism shared by many of Sinn Féin's political opponents.

The IRA's 6 May commitment was first honoured the following year with the disposal of weapons on 23 October 2001, a gesture that was both disclosed and undisclosed, in the sense that it was widely publicized while its details were kept secret.

Responding to this act, Steven King, David Trimble's political adviser, contributed to the discourse on "responsibility"--a term included in the IRA's statement on the disposal--but invested the term with criticism rather than inspiration, arguing that the responsibility of republicans was not to maintain but to sever their connections to a history of violence. Rather than remaining faithful to what Sands had called "the thought that says 'I'm right!'" (from his poem, "The Rhythm of Time" [Sands 177-79], the full text of which has been reproduced in a Falls Road commemorative mural) their task was to rectify their wrongs. "Republicans bear much of the responsibility for the Troubles, and for perpetuating them after any objective reason for violence had passed," King wrote. "That is something republicans will have to live with. In part, they began to accept their historic responsibility yesterday" (King). Republicans have of course turned the same terminology on their opponents. Adams, for example, explained in his Belfast speech the day prior to decommissioning--a speech entitled "Looking to the Future"--that "republicans and nationalists want to be convinced that unionism is facing up to its responsibilities." There was also, he added, "a responsibility upon the British Prime Minister to right the wrongs and to be part of building a new future" ("Looking"). But Adams has also spoken of "collective" responsibilities, in this speech and at his annual Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis* (party conference) address three weeks earlier. The responsibility that falls to republicans, he has suggested, is to pursue a policy of non-violence. In the *Ard Fheis* speech, he repeated his own repetition of Sands's phrase on the responsibility of republicans to play a part in the struggle, applying it this time to himself: "for my part I want to reiterate my total commitment to playing a leadership role in bringing a permanent end to political conflict on our island, including the end of physical force republicanism." To this he added, as though recognizing the troubling paradox of going back to Sands's legacy in order to go beyond it, "I say this conscious of the dangers, risks, and history of such departures" (Presidential Address, 29 September 2001).

The history of such departures is a history of leaps, both toward and away from one's legacies. When Adams' Easter Rising statement delivers two messages at once, it both reinforces and undermines a republican discourse on historical responsibility. His listeners are urged to demonstrate their ties to the past by severing them. Such a paradoxical movement, epitomized in speeches that commemorate martyrs while defending the need to invalidate their methods, has frequently been described as both a "historic" event and a "leap of faith." Before the "historic" act of decommissioning, an *Irish Times* editorial treated moves by nationalists on the policing aspects of the Good Friday Agreement as equally "historic," to the point of investing it with ominous Yeatsian portent in a way that reduces the repetitiveness of the phrasing to mock-epic proportions:

> The gyre of history is surely complete when Northern Ireland nationalists have declared their unequivocal support for the new police, with unionists suspending their judgment. The word 'historic' has been applied to the SDLP's *demarché*. [. . .] It is a term which has been thrown around perhaps too freely in the many twists and turns of the peace process. But in this instance it is the *mot juste*.

The article goes on to argue that "a leap of faith is required" to arrive at an effective policing system which escapes "the sterility and polarisation of the past" (23 August 2001). Two months later, the same paper's editorial reapplied the notion of an active break with history to decommissioning, suggesting that the IRA had finally passed "a historic milestone" and had "displace[d] the ambiguity of the ceasefire and of wordplay with the certainty of action" (24 October 2001). Adams seconded the uncertain wordplay by calling this act of decommissioning "historic and unprecedented," "a huge moment in the history of our island, in the relationships between our island and the island of Britain, in the history of physical force republicanism" (23 October 2001, qtd. in *Irish Times* 24 October 2001). In his speech the same day at Westminster on "The Political Legacy of the 1981 Hunger Strike," he added that this was "a day for political leaps of the imagination" ("Political," qtd. in Donnelly, "Adams").

By this point, Adams was echoing what has amounted to a tradition of references to such leaps in Northern Irish politics, especially since the emphasis in September 1999 on the need to "jump together" in order finally to form the new Assembly (Murphy). Repetitions of this phrasing culminated in Trimble's much-publicized ultimatum to Sinn Féin after deciding in November to enter government with them prior to IRA decommissioning: "We've done our bit, and Mr. Adams, it's over to you. We've jumped. You follow" (qtd. Millar, "Trimble's"). When the Assembly was suspended on 12 February 2000 after less than three months in existence due to Trimble's threat to resign, his leap was predictably mocked as a "bungee jump" (McWilliams). His avowal of willingness the following month to consider re-entering the Assembly through the "new sequencing which will probably not involve arms up front" from the IRA (qtd. in Holland) only intensified accusations that he was being inconsistent, and he was criticized by members of his own party. As the UUP's Willie Ross put it, "[to] say in February, 'Well, we jumped and they didn't follow and that is it,' and then to come back at the end of March and say 'We think they might jump this time, we are going to give them another go' is not on" (qtd. in Breen, "Ross"). As *Irish Times* London Editor Frank Millar described it, when Trimble was encouraged to re-enter government by the IRA's agreement to inspections, he nevertheless decided to "jump alone a second time" ("Trimble's") in a gesture of faith regarded by many unionists as a betrayal of faith. Yet he did so only to jump out yet again by honouring his second threat to resign on 1 July 2001, a date chosen to coincide with the deadline for the Good Friday Agreement's full implementation suggested by the May 2000 Joint Government talks at Hillsborough during which the initial deal involving arms inspections and restoration of the Assembly was reached.

On the Westminster platform where he echoed this language by promoting "leaps of the imagination" that break with the past, Adams characteristically gestured in the opposite direction as well. As in the previous day's "Looking to the Future" address--where he was accompanied by former Belfast IRA Commander Joe Cahill as he officially advised the IRA to make this "ground-breaking move on the arms issue" ("Looking")--he symbolically reinforced his continuity with past generations not only by commemorating the hunger strikers but also by inviting former pro-republican Labour MP Tony Benn to stand beside him as he did so. "Before he began his lecture," as Fern Lane reported in the 25 October issue of *An Phoblacht*, "Gerry Adams presented Tony Benn with a plaque, which included Bobby Sands's famous line that 'our revenge will be the laughter of our children.'" Two accompanying articles in the same issue of *An Phoblacht* accentuate this combined affirmation of and severance from links to the past. The first underscores the theme of historical leaps, admitting the repetitiveness of the theme but confirming it nevertheless: "It may be somewhat hackneyed to talk of leaps of faith in this peace process, but the IRA's decision this week to put arms beyond use can truly be described as historic" ("IRA's"). The second commemorates Terence McSwiney's death on 24 October 1920 (McEoin). The coincidence of these two articles implies that, like the timing of the previous year's 6 May decommissioning promise a day prior to the anniversary of Sands's death, the scheduling of this year's fulfillment of the promise on the day before his famous precursor's death is not a coincidence. Rather, it continues a pattern of betraying republican legacies on the same day as honouring them.

This chapter reads into the mournful rhetoric of the peace process a link between historical responsibility and Kierkegaard's description of indecision and inexpressibility in the movement of faith, by which one leaps beyond the obligations and repetitions of history while remaining within them.[1] Although the historical, cultural, and religious contexts of Irish nationalism and Kierkegaard's knight of faith are in many ways incongruous, specific elements of accountability and disclosure in his idiosyncratic and often "illegitimate" description of Abraham in *Fear and Trembling*, and in his portrayal of the young man in its accompanying text, *Repetition*, are useful for an explanation of the rhetorical oscillations of recent political decisions in the North. In a reading that draws statements from these texts into the context of impossible mourning in Irish commemorations, I will be treating the movement of faith as a historical gesture rather than an exclusively religious one. Emphasizing the historical elements of Kierkegaard's theory in conjunction with the future-oriented promises of nationalism, I aim to understand the leap in this context as a contradictory commitment to the idea of arriving at nations or political agreements. My focus is on the movement of faith as an act which, rather than leaving a legacy, must be repeated anew by each individual and each generation, simultaneously severing and asserting its ties to the past by allowing the past to be "recollected forward" (*Repetition* 131). The decision to take such a future-oriented leap that aims beyond what Kierkegaard calls "melancholy" recollections of an unattainable past is, crucially, undecidable and unexplainable. It is made in a moment of madness and paradox. Like the performative moment of remembering and forgetting discussed in the previous chapter, the leap of faith is a paradoxical act of sacrifice that combines calculation with risk, the accountability of finite return with the unaccountability of infinite loss. In an effort to draw out the affirmative implications and possibilities of commemorative rhetoric, I look for ways in which the interdependent dynamics of mourning described in the previous chapters--the movements of *Gedächtnis* and *Erinnerung*, memory and forgetting, historical unaccountability and accountability--are mirrored in this moment of decision. I align the moment of decision with the rhetoric of republican responsibility in order to emphasize how this rhetoric becomes, like the self-defeating insistence of Sands and many of his mourners on arriving at a historical justification for his actions, a failure that succeeds. Its excess becomes success when the responsible subject is established precisely by failing to honour the obligations by which it defines itself.

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[1] In *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (1846), Kierkegaard's pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, refers to "the leap of faith, the qualitative transition from non-belief to belief" (15) as a concept already described in *Philosophical Fragments* (1844) and *Fear and Trembling* (1843), and continues to elaborate on the leap of faith in the remainder of the text. In *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard's Johannes de Silentio compares the act of decision and sacrifice taken by the knight of faith to the "leap" of a dancer, a "leap into life" (41), but refers to it most consistently as the paradoxical "movement of faith."

If the legacy of the hunger strikers' sacrifice offers a lesson for political acts today, it may be the lesson of a leap of faith that paradoxically opposes the notion of lessons and legacies. The lesson of this sacrifice may be that it has nothing to teach in the traditional sense, because it cannot be carried over intact from one generation to the next. If the hunger strikers' decision exceeds such a concept of seamless continuity, it emphasizes instead the possibility of repeatedly different beginnings. It offers to Irish politics the idea of decision-making that goes beyond the work of mourning, beyond responsibility, and toward the affirmative ability to betray historical principles in acts that are both embedded in history and have "no history" (Derrida, *Gift* 80). As I have argued in the previous chapter, the repeated insistence of Sands and many of his mourners on arriving at historical and ethical justifications for his sacrifice also betrays a failure to do so. The hunger strikes call, in other words, for record-breaking acts: decisions that gain meaning by virtue of the fact that they are oriented both toward the past and the future, both affirming the records they aim to revise and anticipating their own revision in a future for which they, in turn, will function as a revaluable record. Decisions of this kind offer a way to resist stereotypical assessments of the Irish as a people whose obsession with past conflicts locks them into historical repetition. Challenging the fixity of this view of a people transfixed, they resist the obligation to identically recollect the past in a work of complete mourning. By the same token, they resist a common insistence upon taking conservatively "responsible" and "justifiable" action. They show that the maddening element of irresponsibility, like that of impossibility in the process of mourning, is an inseparable and enabling part of the urge to transcend it.

To analyze this resistance to historical responsibility, I begin by treating the contradiction between sacrifice and ethics contained within Kierkegaard's concept of responsibility as a conflict between unaccountable and accountable action--a conflict that creates the conditions for a movement of faith. Focusing then on the elements of repetition and revaluative laughter in such a movement, I offer repetition as a historical possibility enabled by a similar division in Irish commemorative rhetoric as it both grasps and relinquishes history. This rhetoric's own internal resistance to the mournful recollection commonly attributed to it appears not only in commemorations of Sands but also in more recent statements on the issues of decommissioning, political redesignations at Assembly elections, and the reinterments of republican martyrs.

2. Faith

The question of whether a decision is taken responsibly or irresponsibly was central to debates during the hunger strikes about the justifiability of such an action. Some observers followed British Cardinal Basil Hume in claiming that the strikers were committing suicide and therefore breaking the ethical code of the Catholic church (O'Malley 176-77). Hume's opinion was seconded at the political level by Thatcher's administration. While Hume saw the strikes as a form of self-inflicted violence that exceeded God's will and was therefore ethically unjustifiable (O'Malley 177), Thatcher insisted similarly that Sands had "chosen to kill himself," that this was "a needless and futile waste of his life" (qtd. in "Thatcher Firm"). Both Thatcher and her Secretary of State, Humphrey Atkins, accentuated the ironically self-defeating coupling of British politics with Catholic doctrine when they claimed to be adhering to the principles outlined by the Pope on his 30 September 1979 visit to Ireland. In his address at Drogheda, the Pope had insisted that murder must not be called by any other name than murder and that "violence destroys the work of justice" (qtd. in O'Malley 179; Bew and Gillespie 136), a message he repeated in his official Message for the World Day of Peace the following January: "Murder must be called by its proper name: murder is murder; political or ideological motives do not change its nature" (1 January 1980). In a meeting with Cardinal Tomás O Fiaich and Bishop James Lennon during the hunger strikes, Thatcher quoted the Pope in defense of her position that no concessions should be made to murderers (Beresford 276), and continued to publicly insist that "murder is murder." On the day of Sands's funeral, Atkins reconfirmed that the "essential principle" at stake in British policy was shared by the Pope. "Murder is a crime and is not to be excused because the motive is political," he added (qtd. in "No British"), and repeated himself by answering his own question in a statement on the same day: "Is murder any less murder because the person responsible claims he had a political motive? [. . .] The answer is no" (qtd. in Beresford 138).

Other observers followed the more complex and equivocal views of members of the Irish clergy like Cardinal O'Fiaich, Bishop Edward Daly, and Father Denis Faul. In spite of having tried to dissuade the strikers from their protest (as the Pope had also done by sending his private secretary, Father John Magee, to urge Sands to find an alternative method of protest [Bew and Gillespie 149; O'Malley 63]), these men stopped short of calling his action a suicide. They did so, as O'Malley explains, by "invoking the principle of double-effect, which distinguished between the end willed and the end foreseen but not willed" (178). While willful suicide was, to anticipate Kierkegaard's terminology, unethical and irresponsible, a death foreseen but not willed was ethically responsible. This teleological distinction allowed Faul to argue that "the hunger strikes are not suicide" but rather "a responsible protest though of a sacrificial nature" (qtd. in O'Malley 178), a protest in which the ultimate aim was not to die but to focus public opinion on the brutality of the state. Because they were acting "not with the intention of committing suicide but with the intention of fasting to bring attention to the grievance" (Dillon 90), their deaths, Faul argued, were therefore hopeful rather than despairing; they "died noble deaths in defense of their human dignity and integrity and to protect the dignity and integrity of their fellow prisoners--a perfect fulfillment of the Catholic education received in Catholic schools" (qtd. in O'Malley 181). Daly, who had originally concurred with Father Denis O'Callaghan's widely publicized view that the strikes were morally unjustifiable because they promoted a campaign of republican violence (O'Malley 188), nevertheless seconded Faul by arguing, "I would not describe Bobby Sands's death as suicide. I could not accept that. I don't think he intended to bring about his own death" (qtd. in Bew and Gillespie 150; O'Malley 178). Commenting on the ability to oppose the strike and yet also avoid defining it as the mortal sin of suicide as the

Catholic church had done in other countries, including Spain and Germany, Faul later described this duality as a national peculiarity: "Theologically we can justify the hunger strikes but you have to be an Irishman to do it" (qtd. in Dillon 90). The fragility and hesitancy of this position of simultaneous criticism and support was underscored when Faul vacillated by suggesting to Bik McFarlane that suicide was indeed becoming part of the hunger strikers' equation: "I said to McFarlane at a certain stage after three or four had died, 'The motivation doesn't seem to me to be about drawing the attention of the British public to the situation by fasting. It seems to me to be about drawing attention to death and big funerals. This thing is no longer a valid public political protest. It's becoming suicide'" (qtd. in Dillon 90-91).

In these debates, as Faul indicated by justifying the strikes as "a responsible protest," responsibility was equated with ethics. Kierkegaard suggests in *Fear and Trembling*, however, that this equation is unsustainable. A letter to the editor of the *Irish Times* published on the day of Sands's death took the question in this direction. The author, Maire Kirrane, anticipates Sands's death and takes exception to Cardinal Hume's assessment of it as suicide, but does not follow Faul and Daly into a justification of the ethical nature of this sacrifice. It cannot be justified in ethical terms, she writes, but this unjustifiability is not irreligious. On the contrary, it is always a part of religion because faith itself is irreducibly paradoxical. She argues that the simple generalization that suicide is wrong is "theologically unsound." It is impossible to account for Sands's actions except by taking into account the doctrine of the "teleological suspension of the ethical--the doctrine of final causes." Following the terms used by Kierkegaard in his analysis of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac, she writes:

> The ethical expression of Abraham's contemplated act is murder, the religious expression of it is 'sacrifice.' The enormous paradox, which forms the content of Abraham's willingness to kill his son, is only grasped--hardly understood--by apprehension of the leap of faith Abraham took to transcend the ethical for a higher cause. If we say that Bobby Sands' hunger strike to the death is wrong, then we waive the whole story of Abraham.

Because Sands is sacrificing himself "for a cause he deems worthy and just," and because he is doing so "in accord with his conscience," it "cannot be evil for him."

As Kierkegaard shows, it cannot be entirely "good" for him, either, because it exceeds such customary valuations. As a leap of faith, his act is beyond good and evil, because the divine command to suspend the ethical means that the valuation of these terms lies in God's often inexplicable will, rather than in the established and institutionalized definitions of social morality accessible to our understanding. Kierkegaard's analysis of the fear and trembling that characterize such a leap allows for an analysis of Sands's act as one that is free, not only from these ethical categories of good and evil and justifiability, but also from the historical narratives that are appealed to (not least by Sands himself) in order to determine the meaning of an action within such categories.[2] The blurring of these categories begins, for Kierkegaard, with the fact that responsibility takes on at least two different meanings in biblical narratives, and so becomes a term divided against itself. Responsibility, he notes, both defines and exceeds ethics. Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac teaches us that ethics (our duty to others) can be "suspended" in favour of a responsibility that goes beyond ethics, one that obliges us to betray the ethical teleology that usually goes by the name of responsibility. While Kierkegaard points to this paradox where conventionally "responsible" actions may sometimes be exceeded by a sacrificial act of higher responsibility, Derrida characteristically pressures the assumptions of this theory to argue that responsible actions always exceed themselves--that ethics, in the sense of a fully justifiable gesture toward others, is impossible. The idea that responsibility demands both accountability and unaccountability, or a self that is always both the same as itself and different from itself, describes a paradox that is continually reiterated in attempts to come to terms with the deaths of Irish martyrs. As I will go on to argue, however, the reiteration itself offers a way of moving beyond the impasse it seems to describe.

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[2] In what follows, I focus on the problems of unaccountability and singularity that form the structure behind the more specifically religious terminology of Kierkegaard's *Fear and Trembling*. In doing so, I adopt Derrida's treatment of Kierkegaard's divine as part of the

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structure of self-consciousness, a "structure of invisible interiority that is called, in Kierkegaard's sense, subjectivity." If we approach the movement of faith as a decision to respond to a call that provides one with a sense of being absolutely singular, irreplaceable, and untranslatable, God can be understood as an absolute otherness that is always a part of establishing a self. As an other that is both taken inside and kept absolutely apart, the figure of God is what allows for a feeling (always trembling between self and other) of interiority and self-containment. As Derrida puts it, the absolute God to whom Abraham responds functions as "a structure of conscience, [. . .] a witness that others cannot see, and who is therefore *at the same time other than me and more intimate with me than myself*." In the context of Abraham's inability to express his decision in the language of ethics, God becomes "the name of the possibility I have of keeping a secret that is visible from the interior but not from the exterior." He is what enables me to have "a secret relationship with myself" (*Gift* 109).

In ethical terms, writes Kierkegaard, Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac is murder. One of the "paradoxes of faith," however, is that the leap forces us to decide between two incommensurable forms of responsibility: the ethical (or universal) and the religious (or absolute). While Abraham's universal duty is not to commit murder, his absolute duty is to do so--to sacrifice his obligation to his son and his family. Making his decision in a moment that can only be called "madness" in the language of ethics where it is clearly unjustifiable, he disobeys his ethical duty (the command not to kill that is later to be delivered by God as the Mosaic law) in order to obey God's command. The paradox of faith is played out in this contradiction that inexplicably "makes murder into a holy and God-pleasing act" (*Fear* 53), and the madness of this decision to violate ethics comes from being "constantly kept in tension" (79) between two duties, hung on a hinge of "fear and trembling," "distress and anxiety" (75), and irresolvable uncertainty at being offered the freedom and responsibility to choose between them. The fear arises, in part, from being alone in this decision, exiled from the language of ethics. Because he decides to respond dutifully to an absolute Other whose command cannot be rationally explained in the language of all other others, Abraham is paradoxically consigned to "interiority" and singularity (69): "the single individual places himself in absolute relation to the absolute," and is justified "not by virtue of being something universal but by virtue of being the single individual" (62). To teleologically suspend the ethical, then--to reach beyond it toward a higher goal--is to value the individual above the universal. Unlike the more common act of self-sacrifice performed by the tragic hero who "relinquishes himself in order to express the universal," the knight of faith "relinquishes the universal in order to become the single individual" (75). His act cannot be communicated or translated. It cannot be read (71-76). Or, to translate this just as inadequately into the terms of mourning and historicization, it is impossible to come to terms with such an act.

As Derrida has emphasized, the paradox of faith both enables and disables the concept of ethical responsibility. Only by breaking the law of ethics can we conceive of a sense of singularity (or selfhood) by which we consider ourselves capable of performing an ethical act. In an aporia comparable to that of impossible mourning, the responsible self is sacrificed in the act of coming to be thought as something stable, accountable, and capable of making responsible decisions. Kierkegaard expresses the contradictory necessity of being exiled from ethics in order to return to it by noting that while the paradox of faith places the individual, in his absolute relation to God, above the universal, this relation to the absolute is also the means by which he "determines his relation to the universal" (*Fear* 70). The sacrifice of ethics seems to be a detour toward ethics, a step that both negates and affirms its own movement. The ethical is not "invalidated" in this paradox, but rather "receives a completely different expression, a paradoxical expression, such as, for example, that love to God may bring the knight of faith to give his love to his neighbor" (70).

The leap of faith, then, is a sacrifice that sacrifices nothing absolutely. Rather than giving up on the idea of an ethical or universal self, this movement of singularity banks irrationally on the possibility of both losing and regaining it. As Kierkegaard puts it, "by faith I do not renounce anything," because my decision in this instant of madness is made possible only "by virtue of the absurd" (*Fear* 48)--only by virtue, that is, of an indefensible faith in the fact that I will receive a return on my loss, that my sacrifice will both rupture ethics and leave it intact. Abraham "expected the impossible" (16). He "believed the preposterous" (20): that God would somehow save Isaac and "restore to life the one sacrificed." Thus for Abraham, "all human calculation ceased long ago," as well as all human thought, for "faith begins precisely where thought stops." It begins by trusting in the paradoxes of simultaneous loss and return and the double valuation of murder, "which no thought can grasp" (36, 53). Abraham both "resign[s] everything infinitely" and "grasp[s] everything again by virtue of the absurd" (40). He "hold[s] fast" to his ethical desire "after having given it up" (18). Like one of Nietzsche's "great things" that destroys itself in overcoming itself (*Genealogy* 161), Abraham's greatness--a "purely personal virtue" rather than the "moral virtue" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 59) that customarily defines greatness--resides in his ability to contradict himself. When we understand that "he who expected the impossible became the greatest of all," we understand that he is, in his greatness, "like a two-edged sword that kills and saves" (16, 31). And this two-edged sword is also a two-sided coin, in the sense that absolute responsibility and ethics are inseparable sides of the same penny that is thrown away in expectation of its retrieval. As Abraham "would have" advised the tragic hero: "By virtue of the absurd, you will get every penny back again--believe it!" (49).

In contrast to the contradictory greatness of such a knight of faith, the tragic hero, or "knight of infinite resignation," stops short of the leap of faith. He renounces his loved one and preserves her in memory, resigned to recollecting her as a lost ideal that cannot be regained. When we read *Repetition*'s similar story of young love renounced in conjunction with this tale from *Fear and Trembling*, we find two melancholy figures whose sense of presence is defined only in relation to an irrecoverable past. As I will go on to suggest, we can view the concept of an ancient unified Ireland as a similarly irrecoverable ideal preserved by the tragic heroes of commemorative nationalism who stop short of the leap. We can also, however, take the familiar references to political "leaps" seriously by analyzing recent political gestures as moves that aim beyond the resigned and potentially immobilizing logic of loss, and which instead carry the past forward indeterminately in expectation of its recurrence rather than its recollection. To provide the background for this possibility in political rhetoric, and before moving on to *Repetition*, I will turn first to Derrida's reading of *Fear and Trembling* and the leap of faith, where he introduces the convergence of ethics and sacrifice that I see at work in Irish commemorations.

Derrida defines the sacrifice that absurdly expects a return as a "conservative rupture." In this aporetic *"economy of a sacrifice* that keeps what it gives up" (*Gift* 8, emph. Derrida's), neither sacrifice nor ethics can be achieved in the absence of the other. This interdependence in the moment of Abraham's decision causes him to tremble between two kinds of violence. Absolute responsibility (expressed in the violence of sacrifice) violates the law of ethical responsibility or "social morality" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 55) because "it refuses to present itself before the [totalizing] violence that consists of asking for accounts and justifications, summonses to appear before the law of men" (Derrida, *Gift* 62). Yet the trace of what is violated remains. The ethical judgment of murder must be retained in order for the sacrifice of ethical judgment to have any meaning:

> The absoluteness of duty, of responsibility, and of obligation certainly demands that one transgress ethical duty, although in betraying it one belongs to it and at the same time recognizes it. The contradiction and the paradox must be endured *in the instant itself.* The two duties must contradict one another, one must subordinate (incorporate, repress) the other. Abraham must assume absolute responsibility for sacrificing his son by sacrificing ethics, but in order for there to be a sacrifice, the ethical must retain all its value; the love for his son must remain intact, and the order of human duty must continue to insist on its rights. [. . .] Absolute duty demands that one behave in an irresponsible manner (by means of treachery or betrayal), while still recognizing, confirming, and reaffirming the very thing one sacrifices, namely, the order of human ethics and responsibility. (66-67)

If the idea of ethics generates the meaning of sacrifice and is therefore retained within it, the reverse is also true: ethical acts also involve sacrifice. This overlap is demonstrated most simply by the fact that it is impossible to respond ethically to all others at once. Any decision to respond ethically to another human being is necessarily taken at the cost of sacrificing all those equally deserving others who are inevitably excluded from this preferential choice. For the trembling subject faced with decision, this inseparable relation between ethics and sacrifice provides what Derrida calls a “gift of death” through relation to the other.

The concept of the gift of death is useful here because it suggests a link between discourses of responsibility and mourning, allowing us to read them as parallel structures in the language of commemoration. To qualify as capable of opening myself to another--to be fully responsible and accountable for my ethical action--I must already have established myself as a singular individual. Yet such singularity is contradicted precisely by the alterity (the anticipated relation to the other) that allows it to be thought in the first place. Both requiring singularity and making it impossible to sustain, the ethical act transgresses the full and responsible agent it presumes into existence. The self capable of giving ethically to the other destroys itself in conceiving itself. As a gift of death (both given to and received from the other), self-sacrifice relies on the concepts of responsibility and accountability while going beyond them. Because it counts on the return of attaining an accountable self, the ethical offering is always a counterfeit gift, impure, undermining the possibility of altruism.[3]

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[3] Derrida argues that this as the logic behind the Christian doctrine of salvation, which makes of self-sacrifice "a calculation that claims to go beyond calculation" (*Gift* 107). By this logic, a reward of salvation and life after death is expected to be given, paradoxically, to those who give without expectation of any reward. For even when one gives in secret, disinterestedly, without "taking account" of one's action by allowing it to be witnessed and acknowledged by others, God is nevertheless always one's witness and accountant. He ensures that "an infinite calculation supersedes the finite calculating that has been renounced" (107) in the ethical act of self-sacrifice. Like Abraham's sacrifice, any Christian renunciation of earthly rewards is a covenant or "contract" that "has a secret clause, namely, that, seeing in secret, God will pay back infinitely more" than one might have expected on earth (112); one offers one's sacrifice as an absolutely disinterested loss "only to capitalize on it by gaining a profit or surplus value that [is] infinite, heavenly, incalculable, interior, and secret" (109). Nietzsche also points to this contradiction in Christian logic. The powerful cruelty of relations of credit and debt that initiate memory and responsibility is disavowed and internalized by the subject of *ressentiment*, who devalues the will to power while nevertheless continuing to exercise it upon himself. As Derrida puts it, "Christian justice denies itself" yet "remains what it ceases to be, a cruel economy, a commerce, a contract involving debt and credit, sacrifice and vengeance" which are mystified,

The destabilizing aporia of giving and mourning is demonstrated at a linguistic level when responsibility assumes two irreducible meanings--when one is expected to account ethically for an unaccountable sacrifice. The singularity required to assume full responsibility for an action implies an absolute secrecy and privacy that is contradicted by the ethical requirement that such an act also be publicly disclosed and justifiable. As soon as we begin to justify our actions, that is, we enter the ethical realm of linguistic relations where the concept of enduring identity is shattered, and where the self is rendered reiterable and replaceable. When we start to account for ourselves--to "translate" ourselves into public or general terms that make us "readable" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 76)--we lose our singularity. And in losing singularity, we lose also "the possibility of deciding or the right to decide" (Derrida, *Gift* 60). Because to think of oneself is to enter the ethically responsible but self-divisive medium of language, it is ultimately impossible to make a choice that is absolutely responsible--a choice of one's own, independent of others, of language and of history. This contradiction in which a single concept fails to contain the irreducible difference between "responsibility *in general* and *absolute* responsibility" (61, emph. Derrida's) fails also to contain two contradictory notions of remembering oneself and forgetting oneself: "responsibility requires two contradictory movements. It requires one to respond as oneself and as irreplaceable singularity, to answer for what one does, says, gives; but it also requires that, being good and through goodness, one forget or efface the origin of what one gives" (51). This paradox of having to speak in order to justify one's right to remain silent, then, seems

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but never erased, in the concept of grace and redemption (114).

also to engage the reversibility between remembering and forgetting. Responsibility, at which we arrive by remembering ourselves and our duty, requires also that we forget the self formed in this process. We remember to forget and forget to remember in this "aporia of responsibility," where

> one always risks not managing to accede to the concept of responsibility in the process of *forming* it. For responsibility [. . .] demands on the one hand an accounting, a general answering-for-oneself with respect to the general, [. . .] hence the idea of substitution, and, on the other hand, uniqueness, absolute singularity, hence nonsubstitution, nonrepetition, silence, and secrecy. (61, emph. Derrida's)

Any "responsible" decision or movement of faith is thus both responsible and irresponsible, intelligible and unreadable, exiled from and at home in the language of ethics.

In terms of historical comprehension, I began to argue in the previous chapter that Sands inhabits this paradox, in his writing and in memory. On one hand, he is a "tragic hero," who sacrifices or "relinquishes himself in order to express the universal" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 75). Even if he appeared, as some detractors suggested, to sacrifice his ethical duty to his immediate family, he did so in the cause of a higher form of ethical duty to the Irish nation, and in this sense remained within the ethical. His self-sacrifice is readable at this level of the ethical code shared by other members of his nation. His comms and journals, written to anticipate and justify his act of self-sacrifice, liken him to Kierkegaard's hero "who translates himself into the universal" and produces a "faultless edition of himself, readable by all." In "the security of the universal"--the ethical security that Abraham was tempted to seek by placing his love for his son above his absolute duty to God--Sands arguably aims, like the tragic hero, to make himself "understandable to all, memorable for all time," the strength and conviction of his action in turn strengthening those who remember him (76). As Faul's conversation with Martin Dillon suggests, Sands is "understood" both through the historically inherited logic of Terence MacSwiney--"the Irish always win by sacrifice. It's the history of our people. [. . .] We understand that you can win by dying"--and through the tradition of the Catholic church, which has "the capacity to welcome death" (qtd. in Dillon 92).

On the other hand, Sands adopts the role of the knight of faith whose decision cannot be understood by either the church or the nation. Appeals to a nationalist history of sacrifice are undecided in their efforts to come to terms with his decision. And while it may be able to "welcome death," the church resists the possibility of fully understanding Sands's sacrifice within its ethical terms of sacrifice and reward. For Faul, the Catholic doctrine implies that death is "maybe only the beginning" for Catholics while it is "the end of everything" for Protestants, who are offered the possibility of conversion only rather than the comforts of confession, forgiveness, and the sacrament which give the Catholic "the resources to get rid of his guilt." But while it may be able to justify his death in a spiritual sense, Catholic doctrine cannot unequivocally do so in the political sense maintained by the IRA. It cannot account for it as a responsible act of war. As Dillon points out, while the Catholic church has frequently remained silent or implicitly supported armed republican resistance, it has also aimed, through the voices of those like

Faul, to maintain "a campaign against the Provisional IRA and their philosophy of a just war" and to argue "that Catholics are morally bound to reject the IRA" (93-94). This undecidability is implied by the fact that while O'Callaghan and Daly viewed the hunger strike as morally unjustifiable, they could also go on to support the claim for political status and to conclude that the strikers were not committing suicide (O'Malley 187-88).

For church and state, Sands is by turns a tragic hero who translates himself into the universal and a knight of faith who remains untranslatable. In Kierkegaard's reading, Abraham accepted singularity by isolating himself from the comfort of human understanding and instead affirming his absolute relation to God, who understood and saw all. Sands's relation to God had arguably been rendered translatable and expressible through a history of similar sacrifices imbued with mythic republican and religious ideology, but his action is never entirely grasped by either. His sacrifice demonstrates an absolute notion of individual (singular) integrity that exceeds even the understanding of others who nevertheless promote national (universal) integrity.

Feldman, as I have mentioned, suggests that the incomprehensibility of this act to nonprisoners leaves the hunger striker with "an irreconcilable sense of being alien" (164). For Kierkegaard, Abraham is alienated from his homeland and from human understanding. He "cannot make himself understandable to anyone" (*Fear* 76), and even as he speaks (to ensure Isaac that God will provide a lamb for the burnt offering) he still "does not say anything" (118), for he "speaks no human language." He speaks, that is, but also "*cannot* speak" in the sense of communicating himself fully, "because he cannot say that which would explain everything" (115). To the degree that he transgresses the borders of ethics and of the Irish nation, Sands, too, can be thought of as "an emigrant from the sphere of the universal" (115). He sacrifices himself for the nation (finding a higher ethical justification for his act), but there also remains in his act a love and a service too "excessive" to be fully accounted for by the moral code of those who remain (Pearse, *Political* 25; McAliskey xiii).

If Sands inhabits the "threshold" between life and death, he also inhabits the threshold between two incompatible assumptions of responsibility: to be known and unknown. On one hand, he makes a decision the causes and ends of which are conceivable as the act of "a mere follower" (Sands 225) whose integrity is determined by ties to his historical context (Derrida, *Gift* 25). On the other, he exceeds such determinations as his acts remain inconceivable and fail to find their legitimating origin. He is both imprisoned within ethical and historical frameworks and independent of them, demonstrating that "there is no responsibility without a dissident and inventive rupture with respect to tradition, authority, orthodoxy, rule, or doctrine" (*Gift* 26-27). To act individually and responsibly, Sands arguably needs to set himself apart from the group that would deprive him of individuality. He needs to maintain "the resistance or dissidence of a type of secrecy" that "keeps responsibility apart [. . .] and in secret" (*Gift* 26) even while responding, and in fact in order to respond, to the needs of the community.[4]

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[4] Derrida adds that this aporia of accountability and secrecy is denied by those who use the concept of "responsibility" as a way of covering over the lack of foundation that threatens to undermine the fixity of ethical standards and to open "a chaotic process of change in what are called conventions." "Chaos," he writes, alluding to the responsible decision that is both spoken and unspeakable, "refers precisely to the abyss or the open mouth, that which speaks as well as

3. The Work of Politics

The incommunicability of a decision is emphasized finally by the fact that it cannot be learned. Like the promise, and like the reiterable affirmations of Sands's authorities, the decision cannot be communicated intact, and it therefore resists the prospect of continuous development. The language of responsibility in Irish nationalist rhetoric resists such a lack of continuity, but also promotes it. This indeterminacy, approached through Kierkegaard's theory of repetition, leads us to an understanding of the historical sense as a project of recurrence rather than recollection, and to a view of history not as a "passage to responsibility," as Jan Patocka has described it, but as a passage to irresponsibility.

To counteract accusations by more traditionalist republicans that he had irresponsibly prompted "the greatest sell-out in Irish history" with his recommendation that the IRA take the leap of decommissioning (O Brádaigh, qtd in King), Adams made a point of retaining the old in the new, reaffirming a connection while also effecting a break with previous generations of resistance fighters like Joe Cahill. This carefully oscillating

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that which signifies hunger" (*Gift* 84). This chaotic abyss is disavowed but always "at work in everyday discourse," most prevalently "in the axiomatics of private, public, or international law, in the conduct of internal politics, diplomacy and war." The disavowal extends to wars over the concept of intellectual responsibility, where it is often argued, against the view that betrayal is an inevitable part of every ethical act, that "philosophers who don't write ethics are failing in their duty" (67). This familiar "lexicon of responsibility," he argues, "hovers vaguely around a concept that is nowhere to be found" (85). It denies that the concept of responsibility is only made possible and "functional" because, like the concept of decision, it lacks coherence and self-identity (84). This lexicon--prevalent also in the mournful discourse of Irish politics and nationalism--avoids recognizing that "the concepts of responsibility, of decision, or of duty, are condemned a priori to paradox, scandal, and aporia" which reveal "conceptual thinking at its limits, at its death and finitude" (68).

approach was epitomized, during debates at the time, by the advice of Martin O'Muilleoir, editor of the *Andersonstown News* and former Sinn Féin councillor. Responding to the increased local and international pressure that led the IRA to make this gesture of disarmament, O'Muilleoir urged republicans to avoid ending up "on the wrong side of history" (qtd. in Moriarty, "Republicans"). Instead they turned up on both sides, with a historic move that lay both within and outside of their history's naturalized narratives.

The suggestion that it is possible for republicans to arrive on the right side of history--at a position that would allow their actions to be judged and recorded for posterity as responsible steps on the path toward peace--subscribes to the conception of history as a "*passage* to responsibility" (*Gift* 2, emph. Derrida's). Reading the texts of Patocka in conjunction with Kierkegaard, Derrida describes this passage as a path of progress toward establishing a responsible self capable of freely giving or "subjecting" itself to the absolute other (2). Patocka, he writes, proposes a view of history as "a genealogy of the subject who says 'myself,' the subject's relation to itself as an instance of liberty, singularity, and responsibility, the relation to the self as being before the other" (3)--a genealogy, that is, of a subject like Abraham, who establishes his singularity when he responds and submits to God's call by answering, "Behold, here I am" (*Genesis* 22.1). Following such a passage to responsibility (both ethical and religious) we aim to surpass the "demonic" or "orgiastic" phase of human experience, a phase prior to the attainment of accountability and self-consciousness (Derrida, *Gift* 20), during which "one does not yet hear the call to explain oneself [*répondre de soi*], one's actions or one's thoughts" (3). Yet we repeatedly fail to achieve such transcendence. For Patocka, Derrida writes, history is a series of conversions that repress, discipline, or dominate the demonic but never eliminate it (30). Like the sacrifice that expects a return, this conversion is in Derrida's view a "conservative rupture," a historical break that keeps what it gives up. In this "logic of repression that still retains what is denied, surpassed, buried," the undesirable or irrational constellations of the past are not superseded, but only displaced within new systems of historical comprehension (8). They continue to haunt us. And they return, in the Christian era, as the "*mysterium tremendum*" (6, 9, 31, 53)--the terrifying mystery of absolute responsibility to a God whose inexplicable call for a sacrificial gift inspires fear and trembling and necessitates a movement of faith.

The same element of mystery troubles historical conceptions of progress which aim to arrive at "the end of history" (5), at a place of modernized ethical and political responsibility that may somehow transcend the atavistic instability and threatening "enthusiasm or fervor" of political revolution (21).[5] Such a conception of progress along a path toward peace defeats itself through the instability of its own terms. It resists recognizing that the stages of "progress," when deprived of the security of legitimating origins, are themselves revolutions, discontinuous leaps, hazardous dominations. The element of sacrifice retained within ethical gestures is repeated here, in historical and political terms, as the element of unaccountability retained within accountable steps toward political stability--the movement of faith retained within "historic" gestures that simultaneously honour and betray the legacies of those they claim to represent. In the context of Irish political rhetoric, Derrida's analysis offers a strategy of political awareness that hears the equivocation in calls for historical responsibility. Even while insisting on historical responsibility as a criterion for political decisions, it may be possible to remain aware of the fact that "history can be neither a decidable object nor a totality capable of being mastered, precisely because it is tied to *responsibility*, to *faith*, and to the *gift*," concepts that "exceed mastery and knowledge" (5-6). The passage to responsibility can be recognized, that is, as "a process of mourning" (9), "a genealogy that is a cryptology" (20). As Derrida suggests, "one must never forget, and precisely for political reasons, [. . .] that history never effaces what it buries; it always keeps within itself the secret of whatever it encrypts" (21). Each stage of accountable historical or political progress remains haunted by the unspeakable residue of what it aims to overcome.

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[5] In Derrida's reading, Patocka suggests (borrowing from the example of the French Revolution) that "every revolution, whether atheistic or religious, bears witness to a return of the sacred in the form of an enthusiasm or fervor, otherwise known as the presence of the gods within us" (21).

Fears of such a residue have been voiced in relation to the historic 23 October event of decommissioning. While conceding that republicans had begun to live up to their "historical responsibility," Steven King urged his own party to do the same by responding favourably: "An opportunity exists for people of good will to work together in a new Northern Ireland, each secure in his and her own identity. It is an opportunity that unionists should seize, leaving the de Chastelain commission to clear up the physical residue of a conflict that has no place in the new world order." King's advice reproduces the "injunction to mourn" which, as Lloyd notes, is implied by both colonial and anticolonial narratives when they treat commemoration as a means "to enter more lightly into the new world order" ("Colonial" 222). The new order of a North which leaves its refuse behind it for de Chastelain's trash collectors is not only one in which people of "good will" will "work together," but one in which politics must be "made to work," a phrasing upon which figures as disparate as Adams, Trimble, and Ahern frequently insist. In his speech on the responsibilities of "Looking to the Future," Adams said that the aim of republicans was not "to slip back into the past" but "to create a context in which politics work, in which institutions are stable, inclusive and sustained, and in which the process towards equality and justice is underpinned." For the IRA, the political work of overcoming the past would require maintaining allegiance by remaining "in touch with the people, responsive to their needs." This responsiveness could be manifested in a historic move on decommissioning that in turn "must be responded to with generosity and vision" by other parties ("Looking"). Responding the next day to the IRA's initiative, Dublin's Foreign Affairs Minister, Brian Cowen, echoed Adams' words. He urged all parties to be "responsive and generous" to the gesture, and added, as I noted in the Introduction, that "it is imperative that politics is made to work and that the nightmarish scenes, such as those from North Belfast, are consigned forever to the pages of history" (23 October 2001, qtd. in Pierse). Adams concurred by re-emphasizing this kind of political labour in his Westminster speech the same day on the strikers' political legacy: "The hunger strike could have been sorted out if politics had been made to work, the 3,000 people who have been killed might never have had to die if politics had been made to work" ("Political," qtd. in Lane).

While the work of politics is to move into the future and put a seal on the past, Adams recognized in the same speech that this was also a problematic process: "In my view, what the IRA has done today is courageous. It is going to be hugely difficult for many republicans to come to terms with. This whole question of arms is an emotional one. But this is a liberating step by the IRA, provided that others see it as that" ("Political," qtd. in Lane). What makes the work of politics difficult is also what makes the work of mourning difficult for a history of responsibility that "will never come to a close" (Derrida, *Gift* 7). The problem is demonstrated, in part, by the continued negotiation between contradictory terms in the same speeches and responses: gestures of containment are also "liberating step[s]"; coming to terms with the past involves finding new terms; remaining faithful to the past involves also betraying it through "political leaps of the imagination." To leave the past behind is also to keep it intact by consigning it to "the pages of history."

Asked to respond both to the needs of the future and the claims of the past, to retain what Adams describes as "a sense of themselves" ("Political," qtd. in Donnelly, "Adams") even while moving beyond "the violent legacy of partition" that defines them (Adams, "Looking"), republicans face a paradox that places them above an abyss. Commending politicians for their influence on the IRA's decision of 23 October, an *Irish Times* editorial unintentionally evoked such a paradox: "Politicians have looked into the abyss over these past weeks and have chosen the better way" (25 October 2001). If the "better way" is a leap, as others have suggested, it may be a movement that abandons the work of mourning in a performative moment of foundation. Taken as he stands over an abyss that falls between two kinds of duty, Abraham's decision seems to occupy such a moment. It is an act which, in Derrida's terms,

> demands a temporality of the instant without ever constituting a present. [. . .] Understanding, common sense, and reason cannot seize [*begreifen*], conceive, understand, or mediate it; neither can they negate or deny it, implicate it in the work of negation, make it work: in the act of giving death, sacrifice suspends both the work of negation and work itself, perhaps even the work of mourning. The tragic hero enters into mourning. Abraham, on the other hand, is neither a man of mourning nor a tragic hero. (*Gift* 65-66)

Adams has called the IRA's gesture not only an imaginative leap but also (in words also delivered by McGuinness during a strategically parallel speech in New York on the same day) a "groundbreaking move" that "could save the peace process from collapse and transform the situation" (Adams, "Looking"). It may be groundbreaking in a sense which, while not intended by these speakers, nevertheless describes and affirms the oscillating position that both they and others have assumed between the making and breaking of legacies. It could be recognized, that is, as a decisive step necessitated because the ground--the legitimating foundation or origin of violence--has always been broken. Adams rightly acknowledged a widespread republican fear that the peace process may be "undermined" by the demand for decommissioning ("Looking"). Yet the condition of being undermined can be both feared and affirmed in the philosophy that lies behind the political use and re-use of such phrases. A response, both accountable and unaccountable, to the demand to decommission may allow not only for historical misgivings but also for a potentially enabling view of the path to peace as a passage to responsibility built over an abyss that prevents the imposition of supposedly inviolable historical narratives.

4. Generations

Unable at each step to responsibly gather up the knowledge of previous steps on this kind of fractured path, those who move along it are prompted to pass on uneasily in a condition of anticipated repetition rather than recollection. Speaking of the way in which history can only encrypt a past that returns to haunt it, Derrida suggests that Patocka "encourages us to learn a political lesson from this, one for today and tomorrow" (*Gift* 21). What he takes from Patocka and Kierkegaard is the lesson that the movement of faith cannot be learned, but that it is just this lack of communicability, this breaking of the legacies through which lessons are conventionally assumed to be received, that allows for repeatedly different political decisions.

In "Three Songs to the One Burden," Yeats attributes the following injunction to Pearse: "In every generation / Must Ireland's blood be shed" (*Collected* 374). I have argued that both Pearse and his follower, Sands, anticipate the repetition of their act of sacrifice by future generations, and that in doing so they reveal the ephemerality of such performative foundational acts, their lack of continuity, and the need for renewal and re-legitimation through repeated sacrifice and commemoration. Another way to put this is that they emphasize the incommunicability of their decisions even while aiming to establish or communicate a history of sacrifice. Yet their historicized gestures of faith in the idea of the nation, and in the lessons of the past, are most effective and motivating in their failure to make themselves entirely comprehensible.

Because the illogic of the movement of faith is incommunicable, it can only be experienced by each person as an absolutely new moment of fear and trembling. In the matter of faith, "no generation begins at any other point than where the previous one did. Each generation begins all over again" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 121-22). Derrida follows Kierkegaard by describing the movement of faith as "a tradition that must be reinvented each step of the way," through an "incessant repetition of the absolute beginning" that can never engage in identical reproduction (*Gift* 80). He reads sacrifice as a disseminative act, a performance of "that which doesn't come back to the father" (96), as Abraham did not come back to the land of his fathers. In this sense, it is an act of utter abandonment (and abandoned utterance) that resists the assurance of authorial reproduction parodied by Stephen Dedalus in *Ulysses* as the tale of "He who Himself begot [. . .] and Himself sent Himself" (Joyce, *Ulysses* 162). As Abraham sacrifices his son, he both sacrifices and believes in the possibility of reproducing himself and fulfilling God's promise "in his seed" (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 18). The same is true of his necessarily secret decision. In the sense that it "cannot be transmitted from generation to generation," it "has no history" (Derrida, *Gift* 80). The maddening freedom of the movement of faith is also a terrifying, and exhilirating, freedom from the burden of historical continuity and responsibility.

For Abraham's mad act, there is no possibility of historical justification through appeal to the past. Instead, he must absurdly have faith that his act will be justified in an unknowable future. *Repetition*, the text published on the same day as *Fear and Trembling*, turns away from Abraham's story but deals with similar moments of decision which look to the future for their meaning. Distinguishing between repetition and recollection, Kierkegaard describes them as "the same movement, except in opposite directions, for what is recollected has been, is repeated backward, whereas genuine repetition is recollected forward" (*Repetition* 131). Recollection defines the melancholy condition of the tragic hero who has not yet made the movement of faith. As in *Fear and Trembling*, the nameless young man of *Repetition* renounces his loved one because he recognizes that she has become for him an ideal that is impossible to attain in the finite world. From the start, his love for her is characterized by a sense of loss and "melancholy longing" for what she represents but can never embody. Resigned to her loss, he preserves her alive, inside him, as the memory of an ideal that can only be expressed spiritually, one that guides him but is always unreachable. Recollection, then, is a language of supplementation and desire; it "begins with the loss" (*Repetition* 136), and signifies the absence of what it aims to represent. Understanding the present in terms of an irrecoverable past, it renders the present no more than a motionless "memorial volume of the past," a moment in which one mistakenly stands, like the young man, "at the end instead of at the beginning" (133, 137).

The attitude of recollection is bound to the past in the sense that it never gives it up completely but instead longs for a static and identical reproduction of history, a reproduction that inevitably fails. The attitude of repetition, conversely, affirms this failure. It gives everything up. Oriented toward the future, it anticipates not only the return but the renewal of what seems to have been lost, its nonidentical repetition as "something new" (*Repetition* 149). As Stuart Dalton puts it, repetition is "capable of discovering meaning in a future which has not happened yet, and which therefore leaves room for change and becoming, while recollection can only find meaning in an unchangeable past, a relationship in which one is inevitably removed from the present moment of existence" (11). In *Repetition*, the part of the knight of faith is played by Job, whose faith is rewarded in the form of a double return on his loss (*Repetition* 212). Abraham regains and recognizes his son with new eyes, as a gift from God, and in this way his familial love becomes inseparable from his faith in God. For Job, too, the newness of repetition is granted only after he has exceeded not only the limits of universal accountability, but of hope as well--only "when every *thinkable* human certainty and probability [has become] impossible" (*Repetition* 212). Anticipated in the mad moment of faith that goes beyond calculation and the laws of noncontradiction, beyond the logic of loss, repetition is summarized by Kierkegaard as "a task for freedom" ("Selected" 324). Oriented toward repetition, we are free, as Edward Mooney argues in his reading of Kierkegaard, because we are receptive. Placing Mooney's comments in the context of Nietzsche, I would add that we are receptive specifically to revaluation. Such an attitude of receptivity allows one to "[get] the world, the finite and familiar, back again, repeated, but now under the aegis of infinite value, limitless importance" (Mooney 297). Rather than gathering the past into the present to provide the present with meaning, it projects the present ahead of itself, entrusting the future to confer unexpected meaning upon it, and "offering to receptive agents open fields of possibility" (Mooney 288).

In the sense that it both exceeds and capitalizes on the calculations of risk and return, faith in repetition resembles Zarathustra's joyous faith in the impossibility of returning eternally to himself. The equivocation in the young man's comically elevated claim toward the end of *Repetition* to have finally achieved such a state accentuates the

Nietzschean element of the movement of faith. In what is often read as a mere mimicry or parody of this movement (Mooney 291; Dalton 11), he claims that his loved one's marriage to another enables him finally to relinquish recollection, to move beyond loss, and to grasp the meaning of repetition. He treats this achievement as simultaneously a reunification with himself and a loss of himself. "She is married," he announces, and "I am myself again. Here I have repetition; I understand everything. [. . .] The split that was in my being is healed; I am unified again" (*Repetition* 221). Previously, however, he has admitted that "my whole being screams in self-contradiction" (200), and he now seems no closer toward resolution. When his affirmation of selfhood coincides with a description of division through repeated exile and return, his "birth" takes on the quality of the birth of the sovereign that is also his death, the birth of the "emancipated individual" as the "ripest fruit" of internal contradiction (Nietzsche, *Genealogy* 2.2). "I am myself again," he exclaims. "My emancipation is assured; I am born to myself. [. . .] It is over, my skiff is afloat." Yet he is afloat on an ocean where he both risks and gains his life in every moment. Appropriately, for this narrator who remains unnamed, he describes the ocean in terms remarkably similar to those with which the Unnamable describes his own sea of language. It is furious at times, yet also seems to offer a silence in which he might hear himself speak:

> In a minute I shall be there where my soul longs to be, there where ideas spume with elemental fury, where thoughts arise uproariously like nations in migration, there where at other times there is a stillness like the deep silence of the Pacific Ocean, a stillness in which one hears oneself speak even though the movement

> takes place only in one's interior being, there where each moment one is staking one's life, each moment losing it and finding it again. (*Repetition* 221)

The melancholy of recollection comes from resisting a loss and desiring only a return of the same. Repetition gives up this desire, yet also keeps it. It recognizes, to recite the narrator of Beckett's *Worstward Ho*, that a desire to retrieve what is lost is a going back that goes "somehow on" (89). Or, as his unnamable precursor says, "that's right, reiterate, that helps you on" (*Unnamable* 571). Reading Kierkegaard's description of the thing repeated as necessarily "something new" precisely because it "has been" already (*Repetition* 149), Arne Melberg understands repetition as both a "taking back" (as in the literal meaning of the Danish word for repetition, *Gjentagelsen*) and a "making new" (Melberg 75). What seems to have been an established past is now subjected to becoming. As Kierkegaard puts it, "when the Greeks said that all knowing is recollecting, they said that all existence, which is, has been; when one says that life is a repetition, one says: actuality, which has been, now comes into existence" (*Repetition* 149). Because it renews the past, repetition comes "before" or "ahead" of the event in both senses of these words: it comes after, but also precedes the event in the sense that the repetition retrospectively constitutes the "original" by conferring meaning upon it--by making sense of an existence that would otherwise dissolve into an "empty, meaningless noise" (149). To affirm that "life as a repetition" is to articulate the present moment, and this articulation resembles Zarathustra's affirmation of eternal return, which also divides its own "moment." Affirming the impossible return of the same, one anticipates reiteration, and to do so is also to open oneself to the emergence of a newly configured identity and history. The movement of faith, then--reiterated or regenerated in the context of Foucault--can be read as a movement of emergence, a "leap from the wings to center stage" (Foucault, "Nietzsche" 150).

Kierkegaard, who reperforms his authority in the role of Constantin Constantius in this text, accentuates this element of staging in the act of faith by celebrating the performers of farce on a visit to the theatre. These performers, he writes, are "generative geniuses" rather than "reflective" artists (*Repetition* 161). They transform themselves repeatedly, reconstructing and experimenting with their identity and laughing, abysmally, while doing so: "They are not so much reflective artists who have studied laughter as they are lyricists who themselves [have] plunged into the abyss of laughter and now let its volcanic power hurl them out on the stage." Such a performance is always beyond reflection and deliberation. Like Abraham's decision, it exceeds calculation. These players project themselves into possibilities they cannot foresee. "They know that their hilarity has no limits," says Constantius, "that their comic resources are inexhaustible, and they themselves are amazed at it practically every moment" (161). They engage in the "shadow play" of the "hidden" or "cryptic" individual, whose form is not fixed, who is "not an actual shape but a shadow." Their shape may be "invisibly present," but it casts a variety of shadows, all of which represent or coincide with the "self" of the performing subject, but only in the ephemeral moment of performance: "the actual shape is invisibly present and therefore is not satisfied to cast one shadow, but the individual has a variety of shadows, all of which resemble him and which momentarily have equal status as being himself" (154-55). The performer's sense of self is repeatedly cast away and retrieved, exiled and returned in a reiterated existence that creates an innumerable cast of characters that are "equal" only to a self that is different from itself in every instant of utterance.

The amazement experienced by the player upon exceeding and returning to himself in "practically every moment" is, potentially, contagious. It can allow the imaginative observer to do the same, "to be swept along into that artificial actuality in order like a double to see and hear himself and to split himself up into every possible variation of himself, and nevertheless in such a way that every variation is still himself" (154). Constantius concludes that the desire to engage imaginatively in this "passion of possibility" expresses itself "only at a very early age" (154). Introducing the concept of repetition in the accompanying text, however, Kierkegaard's other narrator, de Silentio, suggests on a broader scale that the age is always what we could call "very early," in the sense that each generation is obliged to begin the act of generation all over again (*Fear* 122); like the performer's ability to "hurl" himself onto the stage of possibilities, Abraham's expectation of the impossible is never experienced by learned latecomers. Abraham's moment of decision also shares with the performer a sense of absurdity, repetition and possibility. The performer's farcical laughter, then, seems to correspond to the fear and trembling of the knight of faith, whose decision is always closer to the madness of comedy than the resignation of tragedy, who "believe[s] the preposterous" and is "great by that wisdom whose secret is foolishness" (*Fear* 20, 16).

This correlation, which allows for a reading of the movement of faith as a commitment to non-identical repetition between generations, also emphasizes the performativity involved in affirmations of return. I began to trace this correlation through the performative foundational utterances of national martyrs which anticipate their own repetition and recommemoration, and which, through this anticipation, seem to acknowledge the possibility of a repeated failure to fully grasp or understand their actions. The combined elements of fear and laughter in these generative and transformative performances, as well as the suggestion that the performance is reborn in the actions of each inexperienced generation, recall the disruptive laughter of children described in the previous chapter in the context of Sands, Yeats, and the historically revaluative gestures that are recalled and anticipated as moments of national legitimation. The additional elements of secrecy and betrayal in this process of decision and regenerative creativity also provide a bridge from that context to the emphasis on the key terms of responsibility and disclosure in more recent political acts of decommissioning and Assembly voting.

5. *Redesignations*

While Irish politicians have described their decisions as historical leaps, they have tended to limit the possible significance of such steps by treating them as part of a progression toward ethical responsibility. Like the language of context, commitment, decommissioning, criminalization, and history, however, this rhetoric also works against its own tendency toward totalization. Adams's oscillating rhetoric of historical fidelity and betrayal often seems to demonstrate a recognition of this internal resistance while revealing the way in which the language of imaginative leaps can be redirected against itself. While his political objectives may be partially locked into a republican ideology, as his critics maintain, his language also provides keys for escaping such entrapment, for avoiding conceptually reductive visions of nationalism and history and for repeatedly adjusting political positions. The same possibilities appear when Sands's sacrifice is treated as an indeterminable act which, because it cannot fully be grasped in retrospect, remains open to revaluation. As they become aware of the oscillations in these forms of language, and as they continue to project their moments of remembrance ahead of themselves, political figures appear better able to "look to the future" in a way that exceeds the frequently reductive aim of their claims to be doing so.

To borrow from Mooney's analogy for the possibilities of repetition: rather than coming to terms with the past by locking it away within restrictive nationalist paradigms, such a view of the future would expect the past to escape from its confines, and would therefore be obliged to anticipate a continual changing of the locks. For Mooney, repetition affirms that "meaning or value is not in the 'past-eternity' of finished knowledge--as if we were looking for a mislaid set of keys that will be where we left them, once we remember where that is." Instead, it implies that such meaning is

> to be found or received through the faith that the future will *provide* keys, perhaps not exactly the same keys, but welcome nevertheless. The divine may confer a value-laden world appropriate to our needs in ways hitherto unforeseen--in ways that have not always existed. Repetition returns what was lost on new and unexpected terms. (301)

In addition to recalling Bloom, the keyless wanderer, Mooney's analogy might be read as a comment on the possible future of the republican movement. Following a House of Commons vote which lifted a ban on their use of parliamentary facilities, Sinn Féin's four

MPs (Adams, McGuinness, Pat Doherty and Michelle Gildernew) moved into their new offices at Westminster on 21 January 2002, taking up the keys but still following their policy of abstentionism in refusing to take up their seats in what they consider a foreign parliament, and refusing to take an oath of allegiance to the crown. While the British government viewed the move as one that would "encourage Sinn Féin to become more integrated into the UK's democratic processes" ("Sinn Féin Moves"), these MPs have effectively managed to enter the colonial institution without entering it, taking advantage of the rewards of such a position (their annual administrative allowances, as well as the political significance of such a move which, in Adams' opinion, would "build a beachhead to argue for our constituents' positions but also to argue for a united Ireland" (qtd. in "Sinn Féin Leadership") without assuming it in the context of full parliamentary assimilation that was previously anticipated and resisted.

The Westminster keys were offered and accepted during the same period, and with the same attitude of compromise, as the move on decommissioning. Accordingly, while Sinn Féin's politicians both enter and maintain their distance from a colonial parliament with one gesture, bringing republican and British views closer together while also holding them crucially apart, the other gesture has a similar effect. By initiating decommissioning, they enter and resist not only the British colonial narrative of political progress and responsibility, but also their own.[6] This simultaneous approach and retreat is arguably achieved by the element of secrecy retained in the act. Secrecy seems to function here in the same way as the inexpressibility that makes any movement of faith resistant to distinctions between fidelity and betrayal, allowing instead for both sides of this apparent opposition to be maintained.

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[6] This reading of the key's symbolic function suggests that it allows for an indeterminate positioning both inside and outside of colonial institutions as well as the traditions of nationalism, which, as Lloyd has argued, run the risk of reproducing the modernizing logic of the colonizer ("Colonial"). Recalling his analysis in the same essay of how the logic of recuperative progress and the work of mourning is refused in a narrative that hinges on the absence of a key,

Decommissioning offers itself to the work of political development, but withholds its offer at the same time. It is certainly presented as a legitimate gesture of disclosure. Yet it is also a gesture of hiding and secrecy. I have been reading secrecy in Kierkegaard as the mark of an act that breaks with ethical and historical conventions, an act that cannot be translated into such codes. The element of secrecy in the act of decommissioning, however, also maintains the conventional legacy of the IRA's necessary code of silence. As an obviously public gesture of disclosure, decommissioning breaks with the republican past and enters into a progressive political narrative of compromise. But the disclosure is also shrouded in a secrecy that resists assimilation into such a narrative and maintains its traditional ties.

My reading of secrecy in what follows is indebted to Heather Zwicker's analysis of the political advantages of simultaneous acknowledgment and disclosure in Adams' writings. As a widely presumed fact that Adams cannot publicly mention, Adams' past and often allegedly continuing membership in the IRA is, Zwicker argues, an "open secret," the ambiguity of which he is able self-consciously to turn to his advantage in order to resist the stereotype of "the terrorist." The open secret neither acknowledges nor

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my turn to the same symbol as an example of the resistances of the language of mourning is offered as an emphasis of the fact that such resistance operates in the context of the colonial logic it both inhabits and exceeds.

disavows his IRA involvement, and so enables him to remain a political figure accepted by both the political establishment and by many hardline or traditionalist republicans who might otherwise consider him to have sold out the republican cause (18). His shrewdly managed silence on this point--a silence combined with an encoded "illicit support" (18) of the IRA in the oscillations between fiction and non-fiction, first- and third-person point of view, and earnestness and irony in his prison writings, memoirs, stories, and officially political accounts--undermines the knowability and manageability of the fixed and easily differentiated subject that the "terrorist" stereotype aims to contain (15).[7] Adams also presents himself and others as "moving targets" to the aim of this stereotype through what Zwicker describes as "discursive disarmament," a way of undercutting the presuppositions of the stereotype by representing both himself and his paramilitary colleagues through the mobile rhetorical strategies of mythic association, humanization, and particularly humour, which frequently adopts stereotypical clichés in order to undermine them (13-14). Finally, Zwicker shows how Adams deprives the stereotype of the static context against which it is conventionally distinguished and fixed through his detailed descriptions of republican communities that are diverse, spatially and temporally dynamic, and indeterminately differentiated. In these depictions, she argues, distinctions break down between ordinary citizen and terrorist, and between the spaces of the prison and the city in the "carceral society" (32) of Belfast where Adams shows that "[the] prison is continuous with the machine-like regularity of colonial modernity" (31). While Zwicker's definition of "discursive disarmament" is specific to Adams' resistance to the stereotype through portrayals of the republican community, its military sense offers both an alternative depiction of rhetorical resistance to conceptual containment as a "pre-emptive strike against the stereotype" (13) and a useful correlation--linked to the strategy described in the same essay as a means of both publicly resisting and retaining his connections with the IRA--to the strategic secrecy used in the decommissioning process.

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[7] The structure of open secrecy is also effective in Adams' memoirs and writings from prison in that it "valorises unofficial forms of communication" (19), including the use of code words and phrases, nicknames, and *scéal*, an Irish expression that combines the meanings of "news" or "story" but refers more broadly to a way of colloquially yet strategically exchanging information in what Adams calls a combination of "real news as well as gossip, scandal, loose talk, rumor, speculation and prediction" (qtd. in Zwicker 20). *Scéal* was used by the republican community to relay messages both inside and outside Long Kesh and served as a counternarrative to the censorship and surveillance of the state's epistemological methods (22). Both Adams and Sands describe the exchanges of *scéal* during their overlapping periods of imprisonment at Long Kesh. Adams was the leader of republican prisoners in Cage 11 when Sands was held in the same compound between 1973 and 1976 on a weapons possession charge. Sands was released in April 1976 but re-arrested six months later and sentenced to fourteen years as an "ordinary" prisoner in the H-Blocks. This time he had been charged again with weapons possession after being found with three others in a car containing a gun after an IRA bomb attack on a furniture warehouse outside Belfast.

The IRA's act of decommissioning was described only by the IICD's official statement as "an event--which we regard as significant--in which the IRA has put a quantity of arms completely beyond use." While the statement gives, it also withholds: "We are satisfied that the arms in question have been dealt with in accordance with the scheme and regulations. We are also satisfied that it would not further the process of putting all arms beyond use were we to provide further details of this event" (23 October 2001, qtd. in "Key"). It is an act of political faith built upon the contradiction that the gesture of disclosure and acknowledgment remains both expressed and unspeakable, justifiable and unjustiable, legitimate and illegitimate. If this politically responsible act of decommissioning both adheres to and sacrifices its responsibility to a tradition of resistance, this ambivalence is enhanced by its simultaneous secrecy and disclosure. The act keeps within itself the secret of what it encrypts. It maintains the historical covertness of IRA activity within an overt act of leaving that legacy behind. Specifically, as a gesture that renounces violence in favour of political negotiation (continuing to favour the ballot box over the Armalite, to adjust the phrase coined by Danny Morrison at the Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis* soon after the hunger strikes),[8] it leaves behind it the rationale for keeping IRA operations a secret--the threat of arrest for paramilitary activity--but it does not sever itself from that legacy entirely.

On a practical level, the IRA were understandably keeping silent on the details of weapons locations and disposal because they suspect the motives of the British government, and may want to retain the option of recourse to covert paramilitary operations if the British do not keep to their part of the bargain--i.e. if continuing British demilitarization and rolling devolution do not occur. But silence is also essential to such a manouevre at the equally crucial symbolic and emotive levels that produce such material concerns. It is necessitated by the act's simultaneous responsiveness to and betrayal of the republican legacy. "Abraham is faithful to God only in his absolute treachery" (Derrida, *Gift* 68), responsible only in his irresponsibility. If we read faith as a historical gesture, republicans seem to be similarly faithful to their origins only in the process of betraying them, only when an element of irresponsibility is kept "concealed but alive in the structure of free responsibility that claims to go beyond it" (20). This kind of faithful betrayal is indicated when the IRA perform a sacrifice which, like Abraham's decision, is "outrageous, barely conceivable" (67) to those who argue that such an act betrays their republican precursors--precursors whose acts of violence have been described by their opposition in the same terms. Though the reasons for exchanging or denying information are complicated by mutual agreements and expectations at various levels of government, the details of decommissioning are arguably withheld from the broader republican population at least in part because the act exceeds their historical codes of responsibility. Yet because those details are also withheld from the British state, this secrecy is at the same time a way of reaffirming the republican tradition in whose terms it is not fully accountable. Secrecy says nothing, and says two things at once. It is situated on the borders of both narratives, neither affirming nor denying either system completely.

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[8] "Who here really believes we can win the war through the ballot box? But will anyone here object if, with a ballot paper in one hand and the Armalite in the other, we take power in Ireland?" (31 October 1981, qtd. in Bew and Gillespie 160). In 1992, after years of increasing electoral success by Sinn Féin following the political gains of the hunger strike, Adams confirmed that this slogan was "outdated" (qtd. in Elliot and Flackes 147).

The assembly's Deputy First Minister, Mark Durkan of the SDLP, recognized the sense of betrayal felt by republicans who, in the wake of the move on decommissioning, were experiencing what he rightly called "an added twist of futility in terms of what they suffered and what they lost." These people, he urged, must not be left "in some form of forgottenhood as we move on and not understand the loss they are still trying to come to terms with" (qtd. in Jackson). While this suffering is always specific and severe, the feeling to which Durkan refers has been described in literary, historical, and political accounts in a way that has become what might paradoxically be called a "tradition of betrayal" in republican history. The British invasion and conquest of Ireland in the twelfth century, for example, popularly begins with a legend of betrayal. The rivalry between the kings of Leinster and Bréifne--MacMurrough and O'Rourke--culminated in MacMurrough's abduction of O'Rourke's wife, a betrayal that is traditionally considered the cause of MacMurrough's deposition, exile and subsequent military pact with Henry II and Strongbow in 1169-71. A double betrayal also famously frames the story of Home Rule in 1889, in which Parnell, after the exposure of his adulterous relationship with Katherine O'Shea, was betrayed in turn by his supporters. This incident is remembered in Joyce's early works ("The Shade of Parnell," "Ivy Day in the Committee Room," and the first chapter of *Portrait*) as one in which the nation tore to pieces its own "uncrowned king," and it finds its parallel in *Ulysses* in Stephen's betrayal of his mother and in the betrayal of Bloom by Molly and Boylan.

Re-enacted in Sinn Féin's perceived sacrifice of the hunger strikers' cause, the simultaneous affirmation and betrayal of principles is arguably what allows for political movement. The movement of decommissioning was soon followed by other similar gestures. Prior to Sinn Féin's assumption of offices at Westminster, the act's most immediate consequence was a renewed Assembly election. Since Trimble's resignation, the possibility of re-electing first and deputy ministers had depended on a breakthrough agreement on decommissioning. The IRA had moved toward such a breakthrough by claiming on 6 August to have "agreed a scheme with the IICD" designed to put their arms "completely and verifiably beyond use." No further details were given, however. Trimble rejected the offer as another of the IRA's "empty promises" (qtd. in Unsworth, "Trimble"), in effect seconding Paisley's appraisal of it as "a non-statement about a non-event" (qtd. in Unsworth, "Statement"). As a result of this disagreement, the new Northern Ireland

Secretary, John Reid, suspended the Assembly on 11 August 2001 for one day, taking advantage of the 2000 Northern Ireland Act's allowance for a second statutory period of six weeks, following Trimble's resignation, during which to arrive at a deal between the parties. An agreement on decommissioning during these weeks of "reactivation" would enable him to bring the current Assembly members back together. The alternative, which he aimed to avoid, was either to call for fresh Assembly elections or to suspend the institutions more permanently and reimpose a period of direct rule. Reid took this initiative because it was generally feared at this time that Assembly elections would polarize the new government between hardline loyalists and republicans in a way that had already been indicated by DUP and Sinn Féin gains in the June 2001 general elections.[9] In response, the IRA withdrew its offer on 14 August. They considered the one-day suspension illegal (at this point they would rather have gambled on the likelihood of Sinn Féin attaining more power through Assembly elections), and they blamed unionists for rejecting their offer. Their withdrawal was also a response to the arrests earlier the same week of three senior IRA members on charges of helping to train members of FARC in Colombia, an event which was widely considered damaging for the reputation of Sinn Féin, since one of the arrested men, Niall Connolly, was the party's Cuban representative (though Adams claimed Connolly had been appointed without his knowledge or the authorization of Sinn Féin's international department). The IRA's perceived association with international terrorism soon had the opposite effect, however. On 19 September, following the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, they reengaged with the IICD in a statement that began (as did Adams's 29 September *Ard Fheis* Address) by extending sympathy to the victims.

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[9] The DUP and Sinn Féin had gained two Westminster seats each in these elections, with the result that they now held two and four seats respectively. The UUP had lost three seats, and the SDLP had retained its three but made no gains.

Two days later, after the six week period following the first suspension had passed, Reid briefly suspended the Assembly again to secure another six weeks of negotiating time. Before this second period had elapsed, the IRA made their 23 October move on decommissioning. In response, the British army began dismantling observation posts across the North the next day. They also promised troop reductions and policing and justice reforms. Trimble, meanwhile, withdrew the resignations of his three MLA's from the Assembly and agreed to rejoin government with Sinn Féin pending his own re-election (a decision which unsurprisingly moved Paisley to revive the rhetoric of betrayal on the loyalist side by condemning him as a "traitor" [Moriarty, "Pace"]).[10]

The jump back into government failed, but this failure initiated further gestures of change in what became, for some, another narrative of betrayal. In the 2 November Assembly vote, Trimble lost his bid for re-election. Anticipating this loss, and in an effort to overcome the hardline unionist votes that sought to dismantle the Assembly in its present form, two Assembly members from the previously non-aligned Northern Ireland Women's Coalition (formed in 1996, and comprised of unionists, loyalists, nationalists, and republicans) chose to redesignate themselves in order to swing the vote in favour of Trimble. Monica McWilliams (South Belfast) redesignated herself as a "nationalist"; Jane Morrice (North Down) redesignated as a "unionist." Anti-agreement unionists were angered by the possible politicial consequences of such a move, but the derogatory nature of their remarks in response revealed a more generalized discomfort with the notion of indeterminate identities. They dismissed the Women's Coalition as the "cross-dressing party," as political "transvestites" and "hermaphrodites" (Ingle). In spite of these initial redesignations, however, the Good Friday Agreement's requirement of majority consent from both unionist and nationalist camps in such an Assembly leadership vote still turned against Trimble. Seventy percent of the Assembly as a whole had voted in favour of his re-election. All nationalists were in support, as were almost fifty percent of unionists. But the required unionist majority fell short due to the fact that the UUP's Pauline Armitage and Peter Weir both betrayed their leader by voting against him, resulting in a combined unionist vote of thirty against and twenty-nine in favour.

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[10] While he appeared to step away from a political legacy of division with this renewed return to into the Assembly, however, Trimble began to step back from this ledge at the same time by raising the spectre of yet another deadline for "full decommissioning." Citing February 2002 as the date when the IICD's remit would expire (Moriarty, "Pace"), he foreshadowed the possibility of returning to the politics of the post-dated resignation and sanctions against Sinn Féin.

Once the possibility of political redesignation had been acted on, however, it was quickly re-employed for the same purpose by others. After the vote that now threatened to force a full suspension or Assembly re-election, John Reid was presented with the option, as an *Irish Times* editorial put it, of either "rewrit[ing] the rules or burn[ing] the agreement"; he chose the former, opting to "mov[e] the goalposts" and allow for "a reopening of the rules" of the Agreement (Millar, "Fresh"). He did so by allowing the strategy of redesignation to be used four days later, in a second vote on the same issue, by the Alliance Party. Its members were officially non-aligned (although since their beginnings in 1970 they had formed links with unionists as well as nationalists), and had previously functioned as the category of "Other" in Assembly elections. On 6 November, however, in a gesture described by Ahern as "generous and courageous" (qtd. in Brennock, "Ahern"), three Alliance members joined Jane Morrice in adopting the title of "unionist" for one day. This move gave Trimble the 31-29 unionist majority he needed, and the Assembly and its institutions were restored. Commenting on his party's change of policy, Alliance leader David Ford--who after the first vote had assured reporters that the Alliance would "not be dressing up for Hallowe'en" as the Women's Coalition had done--now said that the decision for three of his party's five MPs to redesignate had been taken "to protect the integrity of the Agreement" (qtd. in Unsworth, "Ford"). More accurately, however, it was a decision that took advantage of an opportunity to do the opposite: to threaten the Agreement's integrity through further revisions. The Alliance party was dissatisfied with the Agreement's imposition of an Assembly voting procedure that emphasized unionist and nationalist votes "while rendering the votes of non-aligned parties almost meaningless" (Unsworth, "Ford"). In exchange for its redesignation, it was given guarantees from the British government and the pro-Agreement parties that these voting procedures would be reviewed in the future. One revision of the rules was now prompting the promise of another.

The fact that what was treated as an assurance of integrity was also a threat to integrity was underscored by concerns, like those voiced by Frank Millar, that "a central tenet" of the Agreement was being broken by these redesignations. "The Belfast Agreement," he wrote in his 5 November editorial which made a familiar call for fidelity to organic origins and principles, "was rooted in the principle of dual consent by the unionist and nationalist communities in Northern Ireland." He resented that this principle was now being overturned by claims that it was not clear--that the rules were indeterminate because of the fact that a weighted majority was allowable in other voting procedures under the Agreement. Calls for revision of the dual consent voting procedure on these grounds, he warned, would submit the Agreement to "lasting damage, possibly irreversible" (Millar, "Alliance").

Similar narratives of broken principles were pervasive, and the threatening revisions continued to be described as a treacherous and violating performance in which material and linguistic, or physical and political, betrayals overlapped. Joining the chorus of ridicule against the Alliance, UK Unionist leader Bob McCartney dismissed the revisions as a "political pantomime," "a charade," a "fraud," and a "distortion," a game of "verbal and political gymnastics" (qtd. in Breen, "Alliance"). Others complained that both Trimble and Ford had broken their word, both having previously disapproved of the principle of redesignation until such a revision of identity could be worked to their advantage. At a Stormont news conference after the event, Trimble was heckled by his opposition as a "traitor" and a "cheater" (Moriarty, "Shadow"). Tempers then flared into physical violence between pro- and anti-Agreement politicians at what became known as the "brawl in the hall," and the recently formed Police Service of Northern Ireland was called in to quell the dispute.[11] The violence of the response revealed that performativity and pantomime could not be dismissed as a laughing matter in the conventional sense of the phrase. They were still very much a part of modern politics, and had serious ramifications.

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[11] That one of the earliest functions of this revised security force was to contain violence not on the streets but in the Assembly was clearly ironic, and accentuated the fact that the distinction drawn by Thatcher and others during the hunger strikes between "political" violence

Ford defended himself against the charge of performativity by appropriating the language that was used against him. Opening himself to further ridicule from McCartney, who could now call him a "self-confessed horse's ass," he said that he would "rather be the back end of a pantomime horse for a day than see the peace process collapse" (qtd. in Breen, "Alliance"). The peace process did collapse, temporarily. But it collapsed only in the sense that these redesignations were, like the gesture of decommissioning that had prompted them, groundbreaking moves that caused its foundations to shift. The instability was revealed further in the shifting of responses to rules that were now becoming indeterminate. Those who had previously sought the breakdown of the Agreement now implicitly upheld its integrity. The DUP's Sammy Wilson argued, for example, that "we in the DUP have been accused time and again of being the wreckers of the agreement when in reality, the wreckers are those who are rewriting the rules every time they don't work to their advantage" (qtd. in Unsworth, "UUP"). Trimble accepted that many people were understandably skeptical of the revisions through which the Assembly had been restored "in a novel way," but he promised that the changes were taken as steps on the way to arriving, by the next Assembly elections of May 2003, at a situation where "we will be

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and "real" or "criminal" violence in Northern Ireland is finally unsustainable. Jokingly emphasizing the return of the threateningly uncivilized residue that the modernizing political process was supposed to have overcome, one commentator noted of this event, "This wasn't a historic day for Ireland, it was a prehistoric day" (qtd. in Moriarty, "Shadow").

in a position to say, 'This is working'" (qtd. in Donnelly, "Criticism"). Here he repeats the insistence of others on the responsibility to make politics work. Yet in the new context of redesignations, the definition of responsibility reads differently. While Adams speaks of the collective responsibility to create "a context in which politics work, in which institutions are stable, inclusive and sustained" ("Looking"), there lies beneath his statements a recognition that politics works, in fact, through the advantages and opportunities afforded by instability. The same resistance inhabits Trimble's response to a success gained by taking advantage of the instability of the new government's foundational document. Both politicians' responsibility to their constituents and to the terms of the Agreement lies in irresponsible acts, in a new kind of labour that breaks ground rather than laying foundations.

6. Reinterment

If politics works by jumping clear of its grounds for historical justification, this abandoning work is also one by which politics exceeds responsibility to the dead that form its historical legacy. Political rhetoric on the peace process suggests, however, as the Unnamable does, that while the work of abandonment breaks with the past it does not overcome it. It leaves nothing behind, and leaves nothing for dead. While it fractures the path toward presence or peace, it remains surrounded by the ruins or residue of the ground it has broken, and aware of the possibilities for provisional reconstruction. The Unnamable pictures this kind of unresolved work in his description of time not as a passage to responsibility, but a passage in which, far from burying the past, we are buried by its ruins even as we move beyond them.

> The question may be asked, off the record, why time doesn't pass, doesn't pass from you, why it piles up all about you, instant on instant, on all sides, deeper and deeper, thicker and thicker, your time, others' time, the time of the ancient dead and the dead yet unborn, why it buries you grain by grain neither dead nor alive, with no memory of anything, no hope of anything, no knowledge of anything, no history and no prospects. (541)

The Unnamable's description emphasizes the desire to be rid of the past. Yet while elsewhere he seems to encrypt the past, to be haunted by false autobiographies that have been "rammed" down his throat and with which he is "glutted" (449), here he is encrypted within it. The past buries the remembering subject "neither dead nor alive." The Unnamable will be a ghost who haunts the future just as the past now haunts him. The difference between mourner and mourned in this case becomes indistinguishable in a way that articulates the projection of the past into the future. As it piles up about him, time progresses toward a moment when the mourner himself will be buried--a moment when he will, paradoxically, become a memory encrypted by the past he seeks to remember. He anticipates his own burial, that is, in a past that will be arrived at in the future, because when he speaks of being buried by the past that piles up all around him, he allows for the thought of a past that completes itself after his death--a past lying before him that amounts to a future. The Unnamable recollects forward toward a past that will not pass away from him, but will perhaps instead be repeatedly exhumed and renewed, as he will be, in moments that are defined not by lack but by expectation of a possible future. If he has "no knowledge," "no history," "no prospects," and "no hope," it is only insofar as these concepts imply absolute presence and consistency in accounting for oneself yesterday and tomorrow.

The attitude of faith in repetition participates in a different kind of hope, whereby one persists in affirming a future for oneself even while knowing that one will be absent from it. The Unnamable and the nameless young man of *Repetition* resemble each other in this respect: both imply that the subject that celebrates having risked and returned to itself risks only ever returning to another, as its sense of self is lost and gained in every moment. This subject's claim to consistency trades on the failure to achieve what it promises. Extending credit to itself, it inscribes its borders only by way of the promise to be able to reinscribe them in a future that it can never fully experience. Like the Unnamable's faith in the ability of words to carry him back to himself and his history, the promise is hopeless, absurd. "Perhaps they have carried me to the threshold of my story," he suggests (577). Yet even while he has faith in stepping over that threshold between words and the self they assume and exhume, he suspects too that this threshold is as far as he can ever be carried--that in the effort to sum himself up, he can only ever be carried over as a remainder.

Remaining aware of the absurdity of maintaining faith in a return to what has been sacrificed implies altering the meaning of return, and expecting only repetition. The knowledge that one is expecting the impossible divides the moment of expectation into one that reads failure as success. Absurd expectation, in other words, is a moment of impossible mourning in which the awareness of difference both enables and disables the illusion of presence. One expects to fail better, to fail to return, to be buried dead and alive in a future where past selves return only as haunting remainders, and where success amounts to repeatedly different forms of failure. If faith involves the ability to make "one more movement" beyond infinite resignation (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 46), the same logic may apply, in the sense offered by Beckett, to other affirmations of failure after which one nevertheless moves beyond one negation and on to another. The affirmation, and the ability to continue to fail, arrives through this process of double negation. The first step is repeated by the second until success seems to emerge from the failure to fail. The Unnamable emerges from silence to speak of silence (567), continually failing to arrive at himself, yet succeeding in the sense that he is most himself when most far from himself. The narrator of *Worstward Ho* fails to make his words fail until nothing remains, and so remains plagued by the obligation to reproduce a ritual of impossible mourning, to go "on back" to the bones, or the material of a past, that produces pain for the remains of a mind and prompts the body into action (90, 96).

The project of going on back to the bones, and the prompting of political bodies into action through the discomfort of division, is literalized when Ireland articulates its identity by encrypting the exiles of its unstable heritage. As well as the international retrieval of the remains of Irish figures like O'Donovan Rossa (whose body was brought back from America for an Irish burial in 1915) and Yeats (reburied at Drumcliffe in 1948), frequent campaigns have also been undertaken to reinter republicans who have died in Irish prisons. Along with five other republicans, Richard Goss, executed in 1941, was disinterred from the prison yard and reburied in 1948. Tom Williams (convicted with Joe Cahill and four other IRA members who received last-minute reprieves for the 1942 murder of an RUC constable) was removed from Crumlin Road jail and reburied at Milltown Cemetery in January 2000. And in October 2001, eighty years after they were executed during the War of Independence and buried in Dublin's Mountjoy prison, Kevin Barry and the rest of the "Forgotten Ten" IRA Volunteers were reinterred. Their reburial with state honours sparked a controversy that underscores the difficulty of laying the dead to rest as a stable part of the nation's history. The effort to replace one history with another (colonial burials with Irish ones) did less to settle Irish legacies than to reveal their ambiguity. It emphasized the way in which the unforgotten dead are repeatedly re-arranged, like the remnants of the past, to make political statements in the present, and it was arguably one of a series of generational failures to repossess what has been sacrificed.

The debate centred around two questions: whether the reburials were scheduled to garner political advantage, and whether they would relegitimate present-day republican violence. The first issue arose because the disinterments took place on the same weekend as Fianna Fail's annual *Ard Fheis*. Thus they were interpreted by many as a pre-emptive strike by the government against Sinn Féin's ambitions in the upcoming general election. Voices from various sides condemned Fianna Fáil for effectively playing the "green card" to steal votes from their increasingly popular republican contenders. An *Irish Times* editorial argued that they were cynically exploiting the sacrifices of the Forgotten Ten (13 October 2001). Lord Kilkenny, an Ulster Unionist peer, compared the reburials to the displaying of saints' relics: Fianna Fáil had chosen to "capitalize" on the the situation "by dragging the bones of these corpses around Dublin" (qtd. in McGregor). Republican Sinn Féin's Ruarí O'Brádaigh, meanwhile, saw the move as a method of diverting and attenuating republican dissent to the Good Friday Agreement: Ahern was trying "to con the Irish people into believing that British occupation of the six counties is normal and that the national question has been resolved by means of the unworkable Stormont Agreement" (qtd. in "Kevin").

The second issue was introduced by Cardinal Cahal Daly, who spoke at the 14 October Glasnevin Cemetery service to a crowd of thousands that included Ahern, Adams, McGuinness, President McAleese, former Taoiseachs Garrett FitzGerald and Albert Reynolds, and Fine Gael leader Michael Noonan. Adding his voice to the conflict over claims to continuity with the dead, Daly argued that the "true inheritors" of the ideals of 1916-22 were those who were now "explicitly and visibly" committed to a peaceful implementation of the Good Friday Agreement (qtd. in Donnellan). Ahern's address more accurately revealed the complications of this question. By "lay[ing] their remains to rest in this soil at last with dignity and honour," he began, the service proved that the sacrifice of the volunteers "is not being forgotten" and "never will" be forgotten by the people of Ireland. The question, however, was whether the memory should honour their commitment to violence as well. His answer was essentially that the context had changed. During the War of Independence, the Dáil had recognized the Volunteers as its army: "they took formal responsibility as the elected representatives of the people for the actions of the Volunteers," and they "accepted accountability" for their campaign of violence. There was no connection, however, between that supportive context and the recent conflict: "it would be quite wrong to apply without distinction any such presumption to other times and circumstances, and to a quite different situation, or to stretch the democratic mandate of 1918 far beyond its natural term." While separating present-day Ireland from the violent legacy of the Forgotten Ten, he also reversed the equation, absolving the dead from responsibility for present-day violence: "Conversely, the memory of the Volunteers of 1920 and 1921 does not deserve to be burdened with responsibility for the terrible deeds or the actions of tiny minorities that happened long after their death" (Oration).

With his words of careful qualification, Ahern seems to recognize the service as a contradictory act that both asserts and resists continuity with the republic's violent origins. Negotiating between the possibilities of both gaining and losing political power with the gesture, he accounts for the dead while also refusing to be held accountable for them. Holding the present apart from the past, he reminds the mourners that "the Good Friday Agreement has moved us to a new stage in our history," but adds that this "certainly does not mean we forget or repudiate those who founded our State," those to whom the Irish State is discharging "a debt of honour." As if to underscore the unassimilability of the past to the present indicated by his balancing of old foundations and new forms, of sacrifice and return, he also notes that this new stage of history is incomplete: "Today's ceremonies relate to the circumstances that led to the foundation of this State, and the sacrifices involved. We have much to be proud of, and the achievement, however incomplete, is considerable" (Oration).

While the reburials may have been intended to lend a sense of completion to questions of Irish identity, the commemorative rhetoric that accompanied them articulates the complications of this goal. Fintan O'Toole summarized the opinions of many detractors by pointing to the contradiction of Ahern's attempt "to put these ghosts of history at rest" while Fianna Fáil's recent past was being "disinterred at the tribunals" concerning party corruption. The funerals, he argued, catered to those who wanted to believe that "the only difference between a terrorist and a patriot is the passage of time." They were not "an act of acknowledgement" but "an act of denial, deliberately designed to sanitise the ambiguities of people like Kevin Barry whose idealistic certainty makes them reckless of other people's lives." "Before September 11th," he added, "that was a stupid mistake. After September 11th, it borders on the grotesque" (O'Toole, "Grotesque").

The context of September 11th, however, is arguably what rendered the commemorative rhetoric at Glasnevin more ambiguous than O'Toole suggests. However unwillingly, Ahern's remarks are at odds with themselves, highlighting their own tendency to disavow the impossibility of fully acknowledging the dead. Adams' remarks concerning the same occasion were also characteristically ambiguous. On the day of the service, he again re-echoed Sands's rhetoric by noting that the funeral was "a fitting tribute" to men who "played their part in the struggle for Irish freedom" (qtd. in *Irish News*, 15 October 2001). This comment built on the connection he had drawn two weeks earlier in his speech at the Sinn Féin *Ard Fheis*, which was balanced between subsections on international terrorism, the Forgotten Ten, and the 1981 hunger strikers. In the context of "the international situation" after September 11th, he stated simply: "Terrorism is ethically indefensible. [. . .] Progressive struggles throughout the world have been set back by the attacks in the USA. There is no excuse, no justification for those type[s] of action." In judging the Forgotten Ten, however, it was crucial to "know the difference between a freedom fighter and a terrorist," and to recognize "that the second can be an agent of a government and a foreign one at that." Having returned the term "terrorism" to its sender in this way, he went on to point out that republicans were not obliged to "apologize for [their] patriots"--"for Wolfe Tone, or Pádraig Pearse or James Connolly, or Maire Drumm, or Mairead Farrell or Bobby Sands or Kevin Barry"--any more than America was obliged to apologize for George Washington. To look to the future, one had to acknowledge the sacrifices of the past: "Republicans continually look to the future, [. . .] but we also acknowledge that it was the sacrifice of previous generations that has brought us closer to the objectives of independence, justice and a lasting peace." As he was to say later about decommissioning, he admitted that the acknowledgment of such sacrifices was difficult. "How do you explain the Hunger Strikes? How do you come to terms with what happened?," he asks at the end of his speech, and answers his own question: "It can be understood only if we appreciate the incorruptibility and unselfishness and generosity of the human spirit when that spirit is motivated by an ideal or an objective which is greater than itself." After speaking of the way in which the strikers "set a moral standard for the conduct of the struggle, [. . .] an example for the rest of us to follow," he added: "if our enemies want to understand us, if they want to understand our struggle, if they want to understand our commitment and our vision for the future, then let them come to understand the hunger strikers" (Presidential Address).

The mourning of the Forgotten Ten on the twentieth anniversary of the hunger strikes revealed how elusive such an understanding, by both friends and enemies, continues to be. Rather than coming to terms with the past, it rekindled competition over what the past's proper contents should be, and necessitated a repetition of ambiguous claims to be both closing in on the dead and achieving a distance from them. The ambiguity in commemorations of other national representatives who are exiled from Ireland in order to define it--from Yeats, Joyce, and Beckett to O'Donovan Rossa and Sands--appears again when Kevin Barry's violence is set apart from a nation at a "new stage" where it seeks to define itself in opposition to violence. The idea of a modern nation defined by peaceful agreement is enabled by remembering martyrs who cannot be absorbed into this definition. Because they cannot be carried along unproblematically on the path toward peace, they are crucial to its continued construction. Their retrieval prevents Ireland from covering over unsuitable aspects of its past, and continued debates over such an event persistently face the nation with discomforting reminders of what it aims to forget. Troubling the nation into rephrasing its history, they keep it from arriving at silence.

In spite of the disjunction between the historical contexts of their stories, the "silence" of indecision described by Kierkegaard in his reading of Abraham shares a specific characteristic with the indecisions of the Unnamable and the narrator of *Worstward Ho*. The resemblance appears when we focus on the issues behind divided responsibility and impossible justification in Kierkegaard's analysis: on the self-defeating paradox of being able to establish independence only by opening oneself to others; on the obligation to publicly disclose one's potential to achieve a state of silence and secrecy, and to translate oneself through the self-divisive medium of language that promises to make one readable and historically comprehensible; and on the absurd expectation of the impossible return of what is lost. The maddening inexpressibility that accompanies these paradoxes links Kierkegaard's portrayal of indecision to the condition of being unable to arrive at the silence that would signify the end of mourning and the end of speech. This specific reading of indecision does not oppose Kierkegaard's description of the knight of faith as a subject consigned to silence; after all, the Abraham of Kierkegaard's narrative is only consigned to it in the sense that, because his decision cannot be expressed as anything other than a logical absurdity, "he cannot say that which would explain everything" (*Fear* 115). His "silence" is in fact filled with last words. His inexpressible singularity is indicated only through the detour of speech that refers and defers, a detour that succeeds in establishing a sense of singularity beyond language precisely by failing to arrive at it. Abraham's absolute responsibility, that is, is conceived only in the language that renders it impossible to achieve. If words failed him entirely--if he were unable to speak--he might perhaps experience by default a silence of singularity, a place beyond words and the work of mourning, in the negative sense sought by the worsening of words in *Worstward Ho*. With his last words, however, he fails to fail to speak. When Isaac asks where the sacrificial lamb is, his father responds by assuring him that "God will provide the lamb for the burnt offering" (*Genesis* 22.7-8). His response is indeterminate. Abraham says something but says nothing, for his last words are unreadable and cannot express his dilemma. He answers "enigmatically," without lying or telling the truth (Kierkegaard, *Fear* 118), and speaks only in order to keep silent about his secret decision (Derrida, *Gift* 118). This secretive speech betrays the ethical code of accountability to his son, yet it affirms the sacrificial decision, the indispensable other of ethics. His message is expressed in the failure to express it. His meaning emerges in the interdependent oscillation between openness and secrecy, speech and silence, accountability and unaccountability, responsibility and irresponsibility. In this reading of indecision, rather than sealing his borders in an encompassing cloud by arriving at either a pure history of sacrifice (a full explanation of his decision) or a pure sacrifice of history (an absolute severance from historical conditions and explanations), Abraham arrives at neither. He inhabits a threshold between complete expressiveness and complete silence, a place of insistent but partial communication through which he succeeds in avoiding conceptual fixity by failing to fully make sense of himself.

As it troubles expressions of unbroken legacies in political decisions and sacrifices, the failure to fully account or justify prompts further efforts to arrive at conclusive agreement on the status of political and national institutions, borders, commitments, and historical foundations. Rather than ignoring the impossibility of achieving such finalization, persistent attempts to fail better may indicate an affirmative and paradoxical faith in the provisionality of this process. In its insistent expectation of the impossible, the commemorative rhetoric of politics in the North orients itself not only toward reductive recollection and return in visions of historical unity and consistency, but also toward its own anticipated revaluation, redirection, or redesignation.

The provisional contexts of commemorative promises resist the possibility of relegating Northern Ireland to the status of a state disabled by an obsession with the past that leads unavoidably to a condition of historical replication. They show that a complete work of mourning can be recognized as impossible without settling on hopelessness or disconsolation, and that the reiterative possibilities of a language of mourning are already being employed as strategies of resistance and revision. Rather than urging a nation to come to terms with the dead or to separate itself from the residues of violence and history, this view of the anticipatory language of mourning affirms a condition in which such limits cannot be imposed. Interpreting political decisions as projects of enabling failure, it situates them at a place where they make sense not in relation to the past, but in relation to an undetermined future in which they promise to prove themselves justified. When those promises for the future contain the expectation that they will need to be repeated, they show that the unaccountability of stable histories and identities is only accentuated by continued attempts to provide those stable forms as foundations for further political acts.

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